

A CRUISE IN NORTHERN SEAS

LORD DUFFERIN



MANCER
AVEL

R. BAN. M. SH. - M LIBRARY

Blore-42

Accession No; 1813

U.D.C No 8-3(DUP)

Date; 11-8-81

N



Handwritten in blue ink: 1873/627




A LAPP AND HIS CHILD,

The ROMANCE
OF TRAVEL

A CRUISE
IN NORTHERN
SEAS

~ BY ~
LORD DUFFERIN



• LONDON •
• HENRY FROWDE •
• OXFORD UNIVERSITY PRESS •
• HODDER & STOUGHTON •
• WARWICK SQUARE E.C. •

Accession No; ...1813...

U.D.C No: ...8-3 (DUF)...

N

Date; ...11-8-81...

THE
ROMANCE OF TRAVEL

A CRUISE IN NORTHERN SEAS

By LORD DUFFERIN

IN THE FORESTS OF BRAZIL

By H. W. BATES

A TRIP UP THE NILE

By ELIOT WARBURTON

DAYS IN THE GOLDEN EAST

By ELIOT WARBURTON

THE LAND OF THE LAMAS

By THE ABBÉ HUC

REDMAN AND BUFFALO

By WILLIAM A. BELL

Other volumes to follow

14186/627

NOTE

THESE pages are taken from Lord Dufferin's *Letters from High Latitudes*, written to his mother, and describing in a most vivid and fascinating way his voyage in his yacht *Foam* to Arctic regions.

Here will be found stories and scenes of surpassing interest—of customs in Iceland and Lapland; of geysirs or “boiling fountains,” of volcanoes or “burning mountains,” of valleys of lava; of ice mountains and ice islands; and of Spitzbergen, the land of the midnight sun, and of a six months’ winter where “snow burns like caustic.”

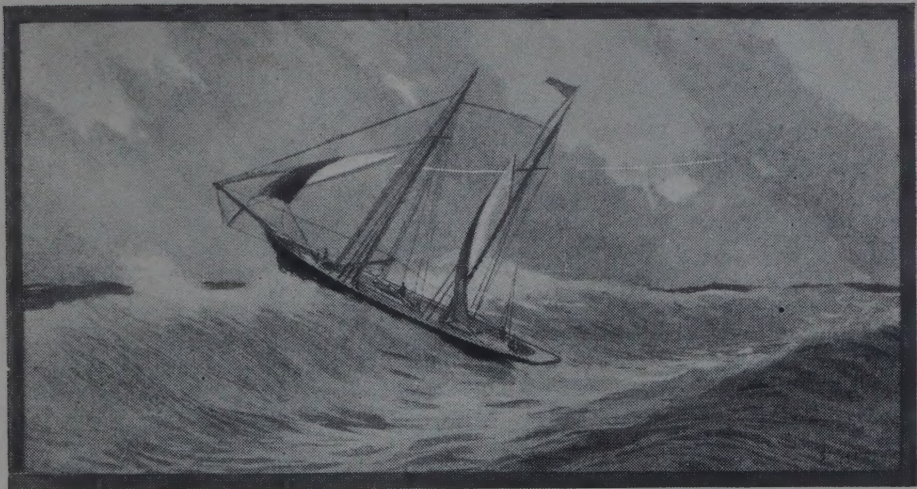
Look at the map for the course of the voyage and the names mentioned in the text.

DRAMATIS PERSONÆ

LORD DUFFERIN	The Traveller, and writer of the <i>Letters</i>
FITZGERALD (“Fitz”)	The Surgeon
WILSON	Lord Dufferin’s valet
WYSE	Master of the <i>Foam</i>
VARIOUS LADIES AND GENTLEMEN . . .	Icelandic, Norse, Lap- landers, French
SIGURDR	The Icelandic guide

The *Scene* is laid sometimes in Iceland, in Norway, and in Spitzbergen; and sometimes on the

Yacht *Foam*—in which the author cruised 6000 miles in Arctic Seas, from June to September, 1856.



THE "FOAM" AMONG THE ROLLERS

I

THE VOYAGE TO ICELAND

Reykjavik,¹ Iceland, June 21, 1856.

WHEN, in parting, you moaned so at the thought of not being able to hear of our safe arrival, I knew there would be an opportunity of writing to you almost immediately after reaching Iceland. We anchored in Reykjavik harbour this afternoon (Saturday). H.M.S. *Coquette* sails for England on Monday; so that within a week you will get this.

For the last ten days we have been leading the life of the "Flying Dutchman." Never do I remember to have had such a dusting: foul winds, gales, and calms—or rather breathing spaces, which the gale took occasionally to muster up fresh energies for a blow—with a heavy head sea, that prevented our sailing even when we got aslant. On the afternoon of the day we quitted Stornoway,

¹ See Map, and Picture on page 17.

I got a notion how it was going to be; the sun went angrily down behind a bank of solid grey cloud, and by the time we were up with the Butt of Lewis, the whole sky was in tatters, and the mercury nowhere, with a heavy swell from the north-west.

By midnight it blew a gale, which continued without intermission until the day we sighted Iceland; sometimes increasing to a hurricane, but broken now and then by sudden lulls, which used to leave us for a couple of hours at a time tumbling about on the top of the great Atlantic rollers—or Spanish waves, as they are called—until I thought the ship would roll the masts out of her. Why they should be called Spanish waves, no one seems to know; but I had always heard the seas were heavier here than in any other part of the world, and certainly they did not belie their character. The little ship behaved beautifully, and many a vessel twice her size would have been less comfortable. Indeed, few people can have any notion of the cosiness of a yacht's cabin under such circumstances.

After having remained for several hours on deck, in the presence of the tempest,—peering through the darkness at those black liquid walls of water, mounting above you in ceaseless agitation, or tumbling over in cataracts of gleaming foam,—the wind roaring through the rigging,—timbers creaking as if the ship would break its heart,—the spray and rain beating in your face,—everything around in tumult,—suddenly to descend into the quiet of a snug, well-lighted little cabin, with the



firelight dancing on the white rosebud chintz, the well-furnished book-shelves, and all the innumerable nick-nacks that decorate its walls,—little Edith's portrait looking so serene, the certainty of being a good three hundred miles from any troublesome shore,—all combine to inspire a feeling of comfort and security difficult to describe.

These pleasures, indeed, for the first days of our voyage, the Iclander had pretty much to himself. I was laid up with a severe bout of illness I had long felt coming on, and Fitz (the Doctor) was seasick. I must say, however, I never saw any one behave with more pluck and resolution; and when we return, the first thing you do must be to thank him for his kindness to me on that occasion. Though himself almost prostrate, he looked after me as indefatigably as if he had already found his sea legs. Strangely enough, too, his state of unhappiness lasted a few days longer than the eight-and-forty hours which are generally sufficient to set people on their feet again. Indeed, at one time we thought he would never get over it; and the following conversation, which I overheard one morning between him and my servant, did not brighten his hopes of recovery.

This person's name is Wilson, and of all men I ever met he is the most desponding. Whatever is to be done, he is sure to see a lion in the path. Life in his eyes is a perpetual filling of leaky buckets, and a rolling of stones uphill. He is amazed when the bucket holds water, or the stone perches on the summit. His countenance corresponds with

the prevailing character of his thoughts, always hopelessly chapfallen; his voice is as of the tomb. He brushes my clothes, lays the cloth, opens the champagne, with the air of one advancing to his execution. I have never seen him smile but once, when he came to report to me that a sea had nearly swept his colleague, the steward, overboard. The son of a gardener at Chiswick, he first took to horticulture; then emigrated as a settler to the Cape, where he acquired his present complexion, which is of a grass-green; and finally served as a steward on board an Australian steam-packet.

I heard Fitz's voice, now very weak, say in a tone of coaxing cheerfulness,—

“ Well, Wilson, I suppose this kind of thing does not last long ? ”

The Voice, as of the tomb.—“ I don't know, Sir.”

Fitz.—“ But you must have often seen passengers sick.”

The Voice.—“ Often, Sir; *very* sick.”

Fitz.—“ Well; and on an average, how soon did they recover ? ”

The Voice.—“ Some of them didn't recover, Sir.”

Fitz.—“ Well, but those that did ? ”

The Voice.—“ I know'd a clergyman and his wife as were ill all the voyage; five months, Sir.”

Fitz.—(Quite silent.)

The Voice; now become sepulchral.—“ They sometimes dies, Sir.”

Fitz.—“ Ugh ! ”

Before the end of the voyage, however, this

Job's comforter himself fell ill, and the Doctor amply revenged himself by prescribing for him.

Shortly after this, a very melancholy occurrence took place. I had observed for some days past, as we proceeded north, and the nights became shorter, that the cock we shipped at Stornoway had become quite bewildered on the subject of the Dawn of Day. In fact, I doubt whether he ever slept for more than five minutes at a stretch, without waking up in a state of nervous agitation, lest it should be cock-crow. At last, when night ceased altogether, his constitution could no longer stand the shock. He crowed once or twice sarcastically, then went melancholy mad : finally, he cackled lowly (probably of green fields), and leaping overboard, drowned himself.

At last, on the morning of the eighth day, we began to look out for land. The weather had greatly improved during the night ; and, for the first time since leaving the Hebrides, the sun had got the better of the clouds, and driven them in confusion before his face. The sea, losing its dead leaden colour, had become quite crisp and burnished, darkling into a deep sapphire blue against the horizon ; beyond which, at about nine o'clock, there suddenly shot up towards the zenith, a pale, gold aureole, such as precedes the appearance of the good fairy at a pantomime farce ; then, gradually lifting its huge back above the water, rose a silver pyramid of snow, which I knew must be the cone of an ice mountain, miles away in the interior of the island (Iceland). From the moment we got hold

of the land, our cruise, as you may suppose, doubled in interest. Unfortunately, however, the fair morning did not keep its promise; about one o'clock, the glittering mountain vanished in mist. So provoked was I at this relapse of the weather, that perceiving a whale blowing *convenient*, I could not help suggesting to Sigurdr,¹ son of Jonas, that it was an occasion for observing the traditions of his family; but he excused himself on the plea of their having become obsolete.

The mountain we had seen in the morning was the south-east extremity of the island, the very landfall made by one of its first discoverers. This gentleman not having a compass (he lived about A.D. 864), nor knowing exactly where the land lay, took on board with him, at starting, three consecrated ravens. Having sailed a certain distance, he let loose one, which flew back: by this he judged he had not got halfway. Proceeding onwards, he loosed the second, which, after circling in the air for some minutes in apparent uncertainty, also made off home, as though it still remained a nice point which were the shorter course toward terra firma. But the third, on obtaining his liberty a few days later, flew forward, and by following the direction in which he had disappeared, Floki of the Ravens, as he came to be called, triumphantly made the land.

The real colonists did not arrive till some years later, for I do not much believe a story they tell of Christian relics, supposed to have been left by

¹ Sigurdr was Lord Dufferin's Icelandic guide.

Irish fishermen, found on the Westmann islands. A Scandinavian king, who lived at the time of our own King Alfred, having murdered, burnt, and otherwise exterminated all his brother kings who at that time grew as thick as blackberries in Norway, first consolidated their dominions into one realm, and then proceeded to invade the rights of the landholders. Some of them, animated with that love of liberty innate in the race of the noble Northmen, rather than submit to his oppressions, determined to look for a new home amid the desolate regions of the icy sea. Freighting a dragon-shaped galley—the *Mayflower* of the period—with their wives and children, and all the household monuments that were dear to them, they saw the blue peaks of their dear Norway hills sink down into the sea behind, and manfully set their faces towards the west, where—some vague report had whispered—a new land might be found. Arrived in sight of Iceland, the leader of the expedition threw the sacred pillars belonging to his former dwelling into the water, in order that the gods might determine the site of his new home : carried by the tide, no one could say in what direction, they were at last discovered, at the end of three years, in a sheltered bay on the west side of the island, and Ingolf came and abode there, and the place became in the course of years Reykjavik, the capital of the country.

There was nothing for it but steadily to beat over the remaining hundred and fifty miles, which still separated us from Cape Reikianess. After

going for two days hard at it, and sighting the Westmann islands, we ran plump into a fog, and lay to. In a few hours, however, it cleared up into a lovely sunny day, with a warm summer breeze just rippling up the water. Before us lay the long-wished-for Cape, with the Mealsack,—a queer stump of basalt, that flops up out of the sea, fifteen miles south-west of Cape Reikianess, its



WESTMANN ISLANDS

flat top white with guano, like the mouth of a bag of flour,—five miles on our port bow; and seldom have I remembered a pleasanter four-and-twenty hours than those spent stealing up along the gnarled and crumpled lava flat that forms the western coast of Guldbrand Syssel. Such fishing, shooting, looking through telescopes, and talking of what was to be done on our arrival! Sigurdr seemed twice the man he was before, at sight of his native land; and the Doctor grew nearly lunatic when, after stalking

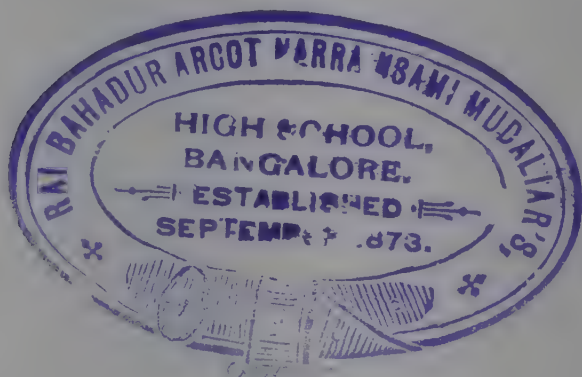
a solan goose asleep on the water, the bird flew away at the moment the schooner hove within shot.

The panorama of the bay of Faxa Fiord is magnificent,—with a width of fifty miles from horn to horn, the one running down into a rocky ridge of pumice, the other towering to the height of five thousand feet in a pyramid of eternal snow, while round the intervening semicircle crowd the peaks of a hundred noble mountains. As you approach the shore, you are very much reminded of the west coast of Scotland, except that everything is more *intense*—the atmosphere clearer, the light more vivid, the air more bracing, the hills steeper, loftier, more tormented, as the French say, and more gaunt; while between their base and the sea stretches a dirty greenish slope, patched with houses which themselves, both roof and walls, are of a mouldy green, as if some long-since inhabited country had been fished up out of the bottom of the sea.

The effects of light and shadow are the purest I ever saw, the contrasts of colour most astonishing,—one square front of a mountain jutting out in a blaze of gold against the flank of another, dyed of the darkest purple, while up against the azure sky beyond, rise peaks of glittering snow and ice. The snow, however, beyond serving as an ornamental fringe to the distance, plays but a very poor part at this season of the year in Iceland. While I write, the thermometer is above 70°. Last night we remained playing at chess on deck till bedtime, without thinking of calling for coats, and my

people live in their shirt sleeves, and—astonishment at the climate.

And now, good-bye. I cannot tell you how I am enjoying myself, body and soul. Already I feel much stronger, and before I return I trust to have laid in a stock of health sufficient to last the family for several generations.



II

THE WAYS OF LIFE IN ICELAND

Reykjavik, June 28, 1856.

REYKJAVIK consists of a collection of wooden sheds, one story high—rising here and there into a gable end of greater pretensions—built along the lava beach, and flanked at either end by a suburb of turf huts.

On every side of it extends a desolate plain of lava that once must have boiled up red-hot from some distant volcano, and fallen hissing into the sea. No tree or bush relieves the dreariness of the landscape, and the mountains are too distant to serve as a background to the buildings; but before the door of each merchant's house facing the sea, there flies a gay little pennon; and as you walk along the silent streets, whose dust no carriage wheel has ever desecrated, the rows of flowerpots that peep out of the windows, between curtains of white muslin, at once convince you that within each dwelling reign the elegance and comfort of a woman-tended home.

Thanks to Sigurdr's popularity among his countrymen, by the second day after our arrival we found ourselves no longer in a strange land.

REYKJAVIK



With a frank energetic cordiality that quite took us by surprise, the gentlemen of the place at once welcomed us to their firesides, and made us feel that we could give them no greater pleasure than by claiming their hospitality. As, however, it is necessary, if we are to reach Jan Mayen¹ and Spitzbergen this summer, that our stay in Iceland should not be prolonged above a certain date, I determined at once to make preparations for our expedition to the Geysirs and the interior of the country. Our plan at present, after visiting the hot springs, is to return to Reykjavik, and stretch right across the middle of the island to the north coast—scarcely ever visited by strangers. Thence we shall sail straight away to Jan Mayen.

In pursuance of this arrangement, the first thing to do was to buy some horses. Away, accordingly, we went in the gig to the little pier leading up to the merchant's house who had kindly promised Sigurdr to provide them. Everything in the country that is not made of wood is made of lava. The pier was constructed out of huge boulders of lava, the shingle is lava, the sea sand is pounded lava, the mud on the roads is lava paste, the foundations of the houses are lava blocks, and in dry weather you are blinded with lava dust. Many of the inhabitants speak English, and one or two French, but in default of these, your only chance is Latin. On this occasion I thought it more prudent

¹ *Jan Mayen*, a little Arctic island, E. of Greenland, N.E. of Iceland—famous for its active volcano, the Bereen Berg, 7000 ft. high. (See Map.)

to let Sigurdr make the necessary arrangements for our journey, and in a few minutes I had the satisfaction of learning that I had become the proprietor of twenty-six horses, as many bridles and pack saddles, and three guides.

There being no roads in Iceland, all the traffic of the country is conducted by means of horses, along the bridle tracks which centuries of travel have worn in the lava plains. As but little hay is to be had, the winter is a season of fasting for all cattle, and it is not until spring is well advanced, and the horses have had time to grow a little fat on the young grass, that you can go a journey. I was a good deal taken aback when the number of my stud was announced to me; but it appears that what with the photographic apparatus, which I am anxious to take, and our tent, it would be impossible to do with fewer animals. The price of each pony is very moderate, and I am told I shall have no difficulty in disposing of all of them, at the conclusion of our expedition.

These preliminaries happily concluded, Mr. J—— invited us into his house, where his wife and daughter—a sunshiny young lady of eighteen—were waiting to receive us.

The next few days were spent in making short expeditions in the neighbourhood, in preparing our baggage train, and in paying visits. It would be too long for me to enumerate all the marks of kindness and hospitality I received during this short period. Suffice it to say, that I had the satisfaction of making many very interesting

acquaintances, of beholding a great number of very pretty faces, and of partaking of an innumerable quantity of luncheons. In fact, to break bread, or, more correctly speaking, to crack a bottle with the master of the house, is as essential an element of a morning call as the making a bow or shaking hands, and to refuse to take off your glass would be as great an incivility as to decline taking off your hat.

At this moment people are in a great state of excitement at the expected arrival of H.I.H. Prince Napoleon, and two days ago a large full-rigged ship came in laden with coal for his use. The day after we left Stornoway, we had seen her scudding away before the gale on a due west course, and guessed she was bound for Iceland, and running down the longitude; but as we arrived here four days before her, our course seems to have been a better one. The only other ship here is a French frigate.

On Saturday we went to Vedey, a beautiful little green island, where the eider ducks breed and build nests with the soft under-down plucked from their own bosoms. After the little ones are hatched, and their birthplaces deserted, the nests are gathered, cleaned, and stuffed into pillow cases, for pretty ladies in Europe to lay their soft, warm cheeks upon, and sleep the sleep of the innocent; while long-legged, broad-shouldered Englishmen protrude from between them at German inns, like the ham from a sandwich, and cannot sleep, however innocent.

The next day, being Sunday, I read prayers on

board, and then went for a short time to the cathedral church,—the only stone building in Reykjavik. It is a moderate-sized, unpretending place, capable of holding three or four hundred persons, erected in very ancient times, but lately restored. The Icelanders are of the Lutheran religion; and a



REYKJAVIK CATHEDRAL

Lutheran clergyman, in a black gown, etc., with a ruff round his neck, such as our bishops are painted in about the time of James the First, was preaching a sermon. It was the first time I had heard Icelandic spoken continuously, and it struck me as a singularly sweet caressing language, although I disliked the particular cadence, amounting almost to a chant, with which each sentence ended.

As in every church where prayers have been offered up since the world began, the majority of the congregation were women, some few dressed in bonnets, and the rest in the national black-silk skullcap, set jauntily on one side of the head, with a long black tassel hanging down to the shoulder,



ICELANDIC LADY WEARING LINEN MITRE AND VELVET RUFF

or else in a quaint mitre of white linen, of which a drawing alone could give you an idea. The remainder of an Icelandic lady's costume, when not superseded by Paris fashions, consists of a black bodice fastened in front with silver clasps, over which is drawn a cloth jacket, ornamented with a multitude of silver buttons; round the neck goes a

stiff ruff of velvet, figured with silver lace, and a silver belt, often beautifully chased, binds the long dark petticoat round the waist. Sometimes the ornaments are of gold instead of silver, and very costly.

Before dismissing his people, the preacher descended from the pulpit, and putting on a splendid cope of crimson velvet (in which some bishop had in ages past been murdered), turned his back to the congregation, and chanted some Latin sentences in good round Roman style. Though still retaining in their ceremonies a few vestiges of the old religion, though altars, candles, pictures, and crucifixes yet remain in many of their churches, the Icelanders are staunch Protestants, and, by all accounts the most devout, innocent, pure-hearted people in the world. Crime, theft, cruelty, are unknown amongst them; they have neither prison, gallows, soldiers, nor police; and in the manner of the lives they lead among their secluded valleys, there is something of a patriarchal simplicity, that reminds one of the Old World princes, of whom it has been said, that they were "upright and perfect, eschewing evil, and in their hearts no guile."

The next day it had been arranged that we were to take an experimental trip on our new ponies, under the guidance of the learned and jovial Rector of the College. Unfortunately the weather was dull and rainy, but we were determined to enjoy ourselves in spite of everything, and a pleasanter ride I have seldom had. The steed

Sigurdr had purchased for me was a long-tailed, hog-maned, shaggy, cow-houghed creature, thirteen hands high, of a bright yellow colour, with admirable action, and surefooted enough to walk downstairs backwards. The Doctor was not less well mounted; in fact, the Icelandic pony is quite a peculiar race, much stronger, faster, and better bred than the Highland sheltie, and descended probably from pure-blooded sires that scoured the steppes of Asia.

The first few miles of our ride lay across an undulating plain of dolorite, to a farm situated at the head of an inlet of the sea. At a distance, the farm-steading looked like a little oasis of green, amid the grey stony slopes that surrounded it, and on a nearer approach not unlike the vestiges of a Celtic earthwork, with the tumulus of a hero or two in the centre; but the mounds turned out to be nothing more than the grass roofs of the house and offices, and the banks and dykes but circumvallations round the plot of most carefully cleaned meadow, called the “tùn,” which always surrounds every Icelandic farm. This word “tùn” is evidently identical with our own Irish *townland*, the Cornish *town*, and the Scotch *toon*,—terms which, in their local signification, do not mean a congregation of streets and buildings, but the yard and spaces of grass immediately adjoining a single house.

Turning to the right, round the head of a little bay, we passed within forty yards of an enormous eagle, seated on a crag; but we had no rifle, and

all he did was to rise heavily into the air, flap his wings like a barn-door fowl, and plump lazily down twenty yards farther off. Soon after, the district we traversed became more wrinkled, cracked, and ropy than anything we had yet seen, and another two hours' scamper over such a track as till then I would not have believed horses could have traversed, even at a foot's pace, brought us to the solitary farmhouse of Bessestad. Fresh from the neat homesteads of England that we had left sparkling in the bright spring weather, and sheltered by immemorial elms,—the scene before us looked inexpressibly desolate. In front rose a cluster of weather-beaten wooden buildings, and huts like ice-houses, surrounded by a scanty plot of grass, reclaimed from the craggy plain of broken lava that stretched—the home of ravens and foxes—on either side to the horizon. Beyond, lay a low black breadth of moorland, intersected by patches of what was neither land nor water, and last, the sullen sea; while above our heads a wind, saturated with the damps of the Atlantic, went moaning over the landscape.

On dismounting from our horses and entering the house, things began to look more cheery; a dear old lady, to whom we were successively presented by the Rector, received us with the air of a princess, ushered us into her best room, made us sit down on the sofa—the place of honour—and assisted by her niece, a pale lily-like maiden named Thora, proceeded to serve us with hot coffee, rusks, and sweetmeats. At first it used to give me a very

disagreeable feeling to be waited upon by the womankind of the household, and I was always starting up, and attempting to take the dishes out of their hands, to their infinite surprise; but now I have succeeded in learning to accept their ministrations with the same unembarrassed dignity as my neighbours. In the end, indeed, I have rather got to like it, especially when they are as pretty as Miss Thora. To add, moreover, to our content, it appeared that that young lady spoke a little French; so that we had no longer any need to pay our court by proxy, which many persons besides ourselves have found to be unsatisfactory. Our hostess lives quite alone. Her son, whom I have the pleasure of knowing, is far away, pursuing a career of honour and usefulness at Copenhagen; and it seems quite enough for his mother to know that he is holding his head high among the princes of literature, and the statesmen of Europe, provided only news of his success and advancing reputation occasionally reach her across the ocean.

Of the rooms and the interior arrangement of the house, I do not know that I have anything particular to tell you; they seemed to me like those of a good oldfashioned farmhouse, the walls wainscoted with deal, and the doors and staircase of the same material. A few prints, a photograph, some bookshelves, one or two little pictures, decorated the parlour, and a neat iron stove, and massive chests of drawers, served to furnish it very completely.

But you must not, I fear, take the drawing-room of Bessestad as an average specimen of the comfort of the inside of an Icelandic house. The greater proportion of the inhabitants of the island live much more rudely. The walls of only the more substantial farmsteads are wainscoted with deal, or even partially screened with driftwood. In most houses the bare blocks of lava, pointed with moss, are left in all their natural ruggedness. Instead of wood, the rafters are made of the ribs of whales. The same room but too often serves as the dining, sitting, and sleeping place for the whole family; a hole in the roof is the only chimney, and a horse's skull the most luxurious arm-chair into which it is possible for them to induct a stranger. The beds are merely boxes filled with feathers or seaweed.

After drinking several cups of coffee, and consuming at least a barrel of rusks, we rose to go, in spite of Miss Thora's intimation that a fresh jorum of coffee was being brewed. The horses were resaddled; and with an eloquent exchange of bows, curtseys, and kindly smiles, we took leave of our courteous entertainers, and sallied forth into the wind and rain. It was a regular race home, single file, the Rector leading.

* * * * *

It is to the spirited chroniclers of Iceland that we are indebted for the preservation of two of the most remarkable facts in the history of the world: the colonisation of Greenland by Europeans in the

tenth century, and the discovery of America by the Icelanders at the commencement of the eleventh.

The story is rather curious.

Shortly after the arrival of the first settlers in Iceland, a mariner of the name of Eric the Red discovers a country away to the west, which, in consequence of its fruitful appearance, he calls Greenland. In the course of a few years, the new land has become so thickly inhabited that it is necessary to erect the district into an episcopal see; and at last, in 1448, we have Pope Nicolas "granting to his beloved children of Greenland, in consideration of their having erected many sacred buildings and a splendid cathedral,"—a new bishop and a fresh supply of priests. At the commencement, however, of the next century, this colony of Greenland, with its bishops, priests and people, its one hundred and ninety townships, its cathedral, its churches, its monasteries, suddenly fades into oblivion, like the fabric of a dream. The memory of its existence perishes, and the allusions made to it in the old Scandinavian Sagas (or stories), gradually come to be considered poetical inventions or pious frauds. At last, after a lapse of four hundred years, some Danish missionaries set out to convert the Esquimaux; and there, far within Davis's Straits, are discovered vestiges of the ancient settlement,—remains of houses, paths, walls, churches, tombstones, and inscriptions.

What could have been the calamity which suddenly annihilated this Christian people, it is

impossible to say; whether they were massacred by some warlike tribe of natives, or swept off to the last man by some terrible pestilence like "The Black Death," or,—most horrible conjecture of all,—beleaguered by vast masses of ice setting down from the Polar Sea along the eastern coast of Greenland, and thus miserably frozen,—we are never likely to know—so utterly did they perish, so mysterious has been their doom.

On the other hand, certain traditions, with regard to the discovery of a vast continent by their forefathers away in the south-west, seem never entirely to have died out of the memory of the Icelanders; and in the month of February, 1477, there arrives at Reykjavik, in a barque belonging to the port of Bristol, a certain long-visaged, grey-eyed Genoese mariner, who was observed to take an amazing interest in hunting up whatever was known on the subject. Whether Columbus—for it was no less personage than he—really learned anything to confirm him in his noble resolutions, is uncertain; but we have still extant an historical manuscript, written at all events before the year 1395, that is to say, one hundred years prior to Columbus' voyage, which contains a minute account of how a certain person named Lief, while sailing over to Greenland, was driven out of his course by contrary winds, until he found himself off an extensive and unknown coast, which increased in beauty and fertility as he descended south, and how successive expeditions were undertaken in the same direction. On two occasions their wives seem

to have accompanied the adventurers; of one ship's company the skipper was a lady: while two parties even wintered in the new land, built houses, and prepared to colonise. For some reason, however, the intention was abandoned.

It is quite uncertain how low a latitude in America the Northmen ever reached; but from the description given of the scenery, products, and inhabitants,—from the mildness of the weather,—and from the length of the day on the 21st of December,—it is conjectured they could not have descended much farther than Newfoundland, Nova Scotia, or, at most, the coast of Massachusetts.

III

BURNING MOUNTAINS, LAVA PLAINS, AND BOILING FOUNTAINS

Reykjavik, July 7, 1856.

AT last I have seen the famous *Geysirs*, of which everyone has heard so much ; but I have also seen Thingvalla, of which no one has heard anything. The Geysirs are certainly wonderful marvels of nature, but more wonderful, more marvellous is Thingvalla ; and if the one repay you for crossing the Spanish Sea, it would be worth while to go round the world to reach the other.

Of the boiling fountains I think I can give you a good idea, but whether I can contrive to draw for you anything like a comprehensible picture of the shape and nature of the lava vale, called Thingvalla, that lies between them, I am doubtful. Before coming to Iceland I had read every account that had been written of Thingvalla by any former traveller, and when I saw it, it appeared to me a place of which I had never heard.

Having superintended the midnight departure of the cook, guides, and luggage, we returned on board for a good night's rest, which we all needed. The start was settled for the next morning at eleven

o'clock, and you may suppose we were not sorry to find, on waking, the bright joyous sunshine pouring down through the cabin skylight, and illuminating the white-robed, well-furnished breakfast table with more than usual splendour. At the appointed hour we rowed ashore to where our eight ponies—two being assigned to each of us, to be ridden alternately—were standing ready bridled and saddled, at the house of one of our kindest friends. Of course, though but just risen from breakfast, the inevitable invitation to eat and drink awaited us; and another half-hour was spent in sipping cups of coffee poured out for us with much laughter by our hostess and her pretty daughter.

At last we rose to go. Turning round to Fitz, I whispered, how I had always understood it was the proper thing in Iceland for travellers departing on a journey to kiss the ladies who had been good enough to entertain them,—little imagining he would take me at my word. Guess then my horror, when I suddenly saw him, first embrace the mamma by way of prelude, and then proceed, in the most natural manner possible, to make the same tender advances to the daughter. I confess I remained dumb with consternation; the room swam round before me; I expected the next minute we should be packed neck and crop into the street, and that the young lady would have gone off into hysterics. It turned out, however, that such was the very last thing she was thinking of doing. With a simple frankness that became her more than all the boarding-school graces in the world, her eyes dancing

with mischief and good humour, she met him halfway, and pouting out two rosy lips, gave him as hearty a kiss as it might ever be the good fortune of one of us he-creatures to receive. From that moment I determined to conform for the future to the customs of the inhabitants.

Fresh from favours such as these, it was not surprising we should start in the highest spirits. With a courtesy peculiar in Iceland, a most jovial doctor, and another gentleman, insisted on conveying us the first dozen miles of our journey; and as we clattered away through the wooden streets, I think a merrier party never set out from Reykjavik. In front scampered the three spare ponies, without bridles, saddles, or any sense of moral responsibility, flinging up their heels, biting and neighing like mad things; then came Sigurdr, now become our chief, surrounded by the rest of the cavalcade; and finally, at a little distance, plunged in profound melancholy, rode Wilson. Never shall I forget his appearance. During the night his head had come partially straight, but by way of precaution, I suppose, he had conceived the idea of burying it down to the chin in a huge seal-skin helmet I had given him against the inclemencies of the Polar Sea. As on this occasion the thermometer was at 81° , and a sunstroke was the chief thing to be feared, a ton of fur round his skull was scarcely necessary. Seaman's trousers, a bright scarlet jersey, and jack boots fringed with catskin, completed his costume; and as he proceeded along in his usual state of chronic

consternation, with my rifle slung at his back and a couple of telescopes over his shoulder, he looked the image of Robinson Crusoe, fresh from having seen the footprint.



PREPARED FOR THE WORST

A couple of hours' ride, across the lava plain we had previously traversed, brought us to a river, where our Reykjavik friends, after showing us a salmon weir, finally took their leave, with many

kind wishes for our prosperity. On looking through the clear water that hissed and bubbled through the wooden sluice, the Doctor had caught sight of an apparently dead salmon, jammed up against its wooden bars; but on pulling him out, he proved to be still breathing, though his tail was immovably twisted into his mouth. A consultation taking place, the Doctors both agreed that he was perfectly fit for food. In accordance with this verdict, he was knocked on the head, and slung at Wilson's saddle bow. Left to ourselves, we now pushed on as rapidly as we could, though the track across the lava was so uneven, that every moment I expected Snorro (for thus have I christened my pony) would be on his nose. In another hour we were among the hills. The scenery of this part of the journey was not very beautiful, the mountains not being remarkable either for their size or shape; but here and there we came upon pretty bits, not unlike some of the barren parts of Scotland, with quiet blue lakes sleeping in the solitude.

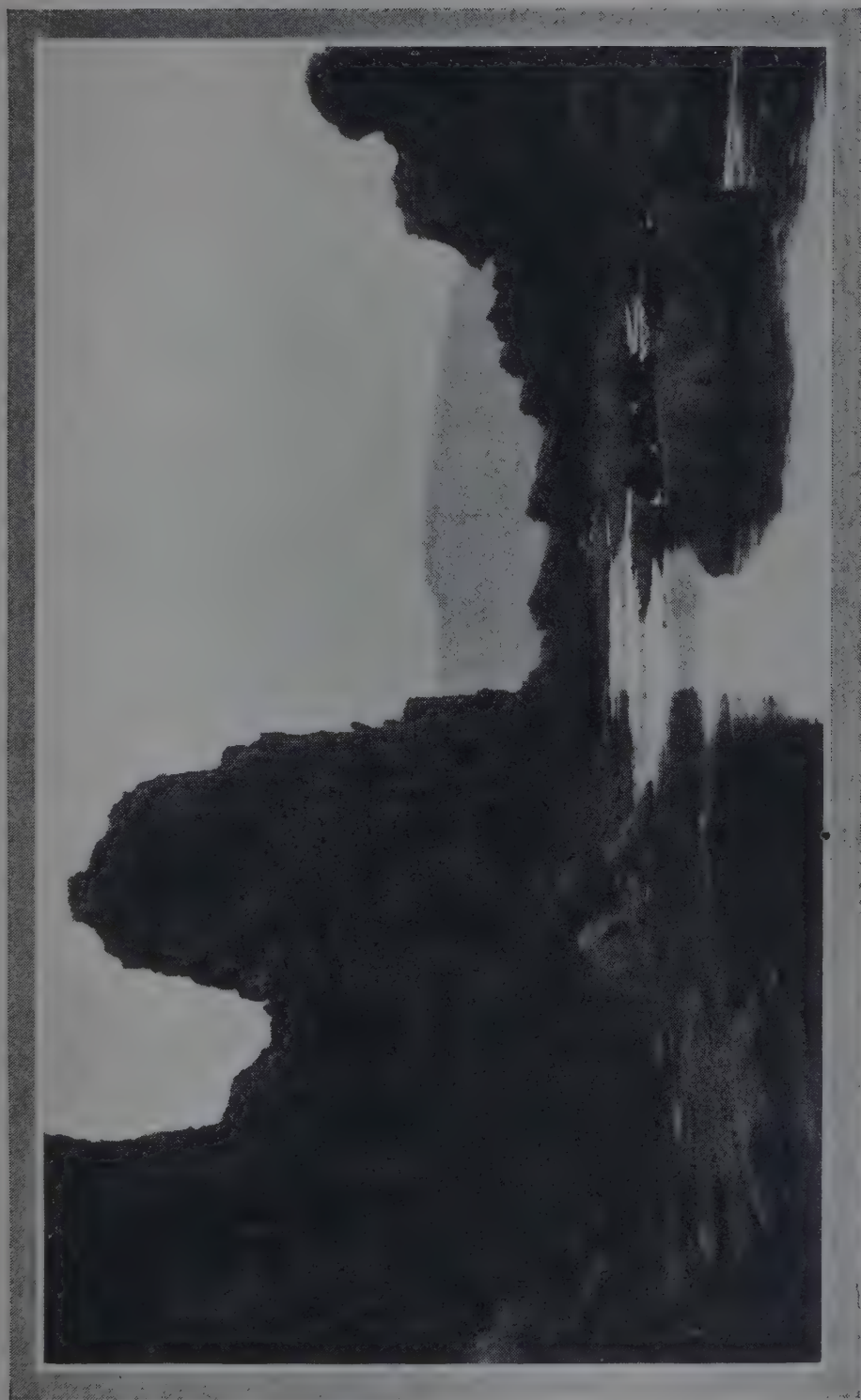
After wandering along for some time in a broad open valley, that gradually narrowed to a glen, we reached a grassy patch. As it was past three o'clock, Sigurdr proposed a halt.

Unbridling and unsaddling our steeds, we turned them loose upon the pasture, and sat ourselves down on a sunny knoll to lunch. For the first time since landing in Iceland I felt hungry; as, for the first time, four successive hours had elapsed without our having been compelled to take a snack. The appetites of the ponies seemed equally good,

though probably with them hunger was no such novelty. Wilson alone looked sad. He confided to me privately that he feared his trousers would not last such jolting many days; but his dolefulness, like a bit of minor in a sparkling melody, only made our jollity more radiant. In about half an hour Sigurdr gave the signal for a start; and having caught, saddled, and bridled three unriden ponies, we drove Snorro and his companions to the front, and proceeded on our way rejoicing.

After an hour's gradual ascent through a picturesque ravine, we emerged upon an immense desolate plateau of lava, that stretched away for miles and miles like a great stony sea. A more barren desert you cannot conceive. Innumerable boulders, relics of the glacial period, encumbered the track. We could only go at a footpace. Not a blade of grass, not a strip of green, enlivened the prospect, and the only sound we heard was the croak of the curlew and the wail of the plover. Hour after hour we plodded on, but the grey waste seemed boundless; and the only consolation Sigurdr would vouchsafe was, that our journey's end lay on this side of some purple mountains that peeped like the tents of a demon camp above the stony horizon.

As it was already eight o'clock, and we had been told the entire distance from Reykjavik to Thingvalla was only five-and-thirty miles, I could not comprehend how so great a space should still separate us from our destination. Concluding more time had been lost in shooting, lunching, &c., by the way, than we had supposed, I put my pony into a canter,



VIEW OF ALMANNA GJA (CHASM), NEAR THINGVALLA

and determined to make short work of the dozen miles which seemed still to lie between us and the hills, on this side of which I understood from Sigurdr our encampment for the night was to be pitched.

Judge then of my astonishment when, a few minutes afterwards, I was arrested in full career by a tremendous precipice, or rather chasm, which suddenly gaped beneath my feet, and completely separated the barren plateau we had been so painfully traversing from a lovely, gay, sunlit flat, ten miles broad, that lay—sunk at a level lower by a hundred feet—between us and the opposite mountains. I was never so completely taken by surprise; Sigurdr's purposely vague description of our halting place was accounted for.

We had reached the famous *Almanna Chasm*. Like a black rampart in the distance, a corresponding chasm cut across the lower slope of the distant hills, and between them now slept in beauty and sunshine the broad verdant¹ plain of Thingvalla.

Agès ago,—who shall say how long?—some vast commotion shook the foundations of the island, and bubbling up from sources far away amid the inland hills, a fiery deluge must have rushed down between their ridges, until, escaping from the narrower gorges, it found space to spread itself into one broad sheet of molten stone over an entire district of country, reducing its varied surface to one vast blackened level.

¹ *Verdant* because the plain of Thingvalla is in a great measure clothed with birch brushwood.

But to return to where I left myself, on the edge of the cliff, gazing down with astonished eyes over the panorama of land and water embedded at my feet. I could scarcely speak for pleasure and surprise; Fitz was equally taken aback, and as for Wilson, he looked as if he thought we had arrived at the end of the world. After having allowed us sufficient time to admire the prospect, Sigurdr turned to the left, along the edge of the precipice, until we reached a narrow pathway which led across the bottom, and up the opposite side of the Chasm, into the plain of Thingvalla. By rights our tents ought to have arrived before us, but when we reached the little glebe where we expected to find them pitched, no signs of servants, guides, or horses were to be seen.

Be the cause what it might, the result was not agreeable. We were very tired, very hungry, and it had just begun to rain.

It is true there was a clergyman's house and a church, both built of stones covered with turf sods, close by; at the one, perhaps, we could get milk, and in the other we could sleep, as our betters had done before us; but its inside looked so dark, and damp, and cold, and charnel-like, that one really doubted whether lying in the churchyard would not be snugger. You may guess, then, how great was my relief when our belated baggage train was descried against the skyline, as it slowly wended its way along the purple edge of the precipice towards the staircase by which we had already descended.

Half an hour afterwards the little plot of grass selected for the site of our encampment was covered over with poles, boxes, caldrons, tea kettles, and all the paraphernalia of a gipsy settlement. Wilson's Kaffir experience came at once into play, and under his solemn but effective superintendence, in less than twenty minutes the horn-headed tent rose, dry and taut, upon the sward. Having carpeted the floor with oilskin rugs, and arranged our three beds with their clean crisp sheets, blankets and coverlets complete, at the back, he proceeded to lay out the dinner table at the tent door with as much decorum as if we were expecting the Archbishop of Canterbury.

All this time the cook, who looked a little pale, and moved, I observed, with difficulty, was mysteriously closeted with a spirit lamp inside a diminutive tent of his own, through the door of which the most delicious whiffs occasionally permeated. Olaf and his comrades had driven off the horses to their pastures; and Sigurdr and I were deep in a game of chess. Luckily, the shower, which threatened us a moment, had blown over. Though now almost nine o'clock p.m., it was as bright as midday; the sky burned like a dome of gold, and silence and deep peace brooded over the fair grass-robed plain, that once had been so fearfully convulsed.

You may be quite sure our dinner went off merrily; the salmon proved excellent, the plover and ptarmigan were done to a turn.

After another game or two of chess, a pleasant

chat, a gentle stroll, we also turned in; and for the next eight hours, perfect silence reigned throughout our little encampment, except when Wilson's sob-like snores shook to their foundation the canvas wall that sheltered him.

When I awoke—I do not know at what hour, for from this time we kept no account of day or night—the white sunlight was streaming into the tent, and the whole landscape was gleaming and glowing in the beauty of one of the hottest summer-days I ever remember. We breakfasted in our shirt sleeves, and I was forced to wrap my head in a white handkerchief for fear of the sun. As we were all a little stiff after our ride, I could not resist the temptation of spending the day where we were, and examining more leisurely the wonderful features of the neighbourhood.

Independently of its natural curiosities, Thingvalla was most interesting to me on account of the historical associations connected with it. Here, long ago, at a period when feudal despotism was the only government known throughout Europe, free parliaments used to sit in peace, and regulate the affairs of the young Republic; and to this hour the precincts of its House of Parliament are as distinct and unchanged as on the day when the high-hearted fathers of the emigration first consecrated them to the service of a free nation. By a freak of nature as the subsiding plain cracked and shivered into twenty thousand fissures, an irregular oval area, of about two hundred feet by fifty, was left almost entirely surrounded by a crevice so deep and broad

as to be utterly impassable;—at one extremity alone a scanty causeway connected it with the adjoining level, and allowed of access to its interior.

It is true, just at one point the encircling chasm grows so narrow as to be within the possibility of a jump; and an ancient worthy, named Flosi, pursued by his enemies, did actually take it at a fly; but as leaping an inch short would have entailed certain drowning in the bright green waters that sleep forty feet below, you can conceive there was never much danger of this entrance becoming a thoroughfare. I confess that for one moment, while contemplating the scene of Flosi's exploit, I felt,—like a true Briton,—an idiotic desire to be able to say that I had done the same;—that I survive to write this letter is a proof of my having come subsequently to my senses.

This spot then, erected by nature almost into a fortress, the founders of the Icelandic constitution chose for the meetings of their Thing,¹ or Parliament; armed guards defended the entrance; to this day, at the upper end of the place of meeting, may be seen the three hummocks, where sat in state the chiefs and judges of the land.

But those grand old times have long since passed away. Along the banks of the river² no longer glisten the tents and booths of the assembled lieges; no longer stalwart men guard the narrow entrance to the Parliament House; ravens alone sit on the

¹ From *thing*, to speak. We have a vestige of the same word in *Dingwall*, a town of Ross-shire. (Our word *Parliament* comes from French *parler*, to speak.)

² The river Oxeraa.



THE OLD LÖGBERG (HILL OF LAWS OR OPEN-AIR COURT OF JUSTICE AT THINGVALLA)

sacred Lögberg (Hill of Laws); and the floor of the old Icelandic House of Commons is ignominiously cropped by the sheep of the parson. For three hundred years did the gallant little Republic maintain its independence—three hundred years of unequalled literary and political vigour. At last its day of doom drew near. Like the Scotch nobles in the time of Elizabeth, their own chieftains intrigued against the liberties of the Icelandic people; and in 1261 the island became an appanage of the Norwegian crown. Later on, the allegiance of the people of Iceland was passively transferred to the Danish crown. A printing-press was introduced as early as 1530, and ever since the sixteenth century many works of merit have been produced from time to time by Icelandic genius. Shakespeare, Milton, and Pope have been translated into the native tongue; one of the best-printed newspapers I have ever seen is now published at Reykjavik; and the Colleges of Copenhagen are adorned by many an illustrious Icelandic scholar; but the glory of the old days is departed, and it is across a wide desolate flat of ignoble annals, as dull and arid as their own lava plains, that the student has to look back upon the glorious drama of Iceland's early history. As I gazed around on the silent, deserted plain, and paced to and fro along the untrodden grass that now clothed the Parliament House, I could scarcely believe it had ever been the battle-field where such keen and energetic wits encountered,—that the fire-scathed rocks I saw before me were the very same that had once inspired one of the most success-

ful rhetorical appeals ever hazarded in a public assembly.

As an account of the debate to which I allude has been carefully preserved, I may as well give you an abstract of it. A more characteristic leaf out of the Parliamentary Annals of Iceland you could scarcely have.

In the summer of the year 1000, when Ethelred the Unready ruled in England, the Icelandic Parliament was convened for the consideration of a very important subject—no less important, indeed, than an enquiry into the merits of a new religion lately brought into the country by certain emissaries of Olaf Tryggveson,—the first Christian King of Norway, and the same who pulled down London bridge.

The assembly met. The Norse missionaries were called upon to enunciate to the House the tenets of the faith they were commissioned to disclose; and the debate began. Great and fierce was the difference of opinion. The discussion was at its height, when suddenly a fearful peal of subterranean thunder roared around the Parliament House. “Listen!” cried an orator of the pagan party; “how angry is Odin that we should even consider the subject of a new religion. His fires will consume us.” To which a ready debater on the other side replied, by “begging leave to ask the honourable gentleman—with whom were the gods angry when these rocks were melted?”—pointing to the devastated plain around him. The Christian religion was then adopted by a large majority.

From the Parliament House we strolled over to the Almanna Chasm, visiting the Pool of Execution on our way. As I have already mentioned, a river from the plateau above leaps over the precipice into the bottom of the Chasm, and flows for a certain distance between its walls. At the foot of the fall



FALLS OF THE OXERAA

the waters linger for a moment in a dark, deep, brimming pool, hemmed in by a circle of ruined rocks; to this pool, in ancient times, all women convicted of capital crimes were immediately taken, and drowned. Witchcraft seems to have been the principal weakness of ladies in those days, throughout the Scandinavian countries. For a long period no disgrace was attached to its profession. Odin

himself, we are expressly told, was a great adept, and always found himself very much exhausted at the end of his performance. At last the advent of Christianity threw discredit on the practice; severe punishments were denounced against all who indulged in it.

Turning aside from what, I dare say, was the scene of many an unrecorded tragedy, we descended the gorge of the Almanná Chasm, towards the lake; and I took advantage of the opportunity again to examine its marvellous construction. The perpendicular walls of rock rose on either hand from the flat greensward that carpeted its bottom, pretty much as the waters of the Red Sea must have risen on each side of the fugitive Israelites. A blaze of light smote the face of one cliff, while the other lay in the deepest shadow. A walk of about twenty minutes brought us to the borders of the lake—a glorious expanse of water, fifteen miles long, by eight miles broad, occupying a basin formed by the same hills, which must also, I imagine, have arrested the further progress of the lava torrent. A lovelier scene I have seldom witnessed. In the foreground lay huge masses of rock and lava, tossed about like the ruins of a world, and washed by waters bright and green. Beyond, a bevy of distant mountains peeped over each other's shoulders into the silver mirror at their feet, while here and there from among their purple ridges columns of white vapour rose like altar smoke toward the tranquil heaven.

The next morning we started for the Geysirs :

this time dividing the baggage train, and sending on the cook in light marching order, with the materials for dinner. The weather still remained unclouded, and each mile we advanced disclosed some new wonder in the unearthly landscape. A three hours' ride brought us to the Rabna Chasm, the eastern boundary of Thingvalla, and, winding up its rugged face, we took our last look over the lovely plain beneath us, and then manfully set forward across the same kind of arid lava plateau as that which we had already traversed before arriving at the Almanna Chasm. But instead of the boundless immensity which had then so much disheartened us, the present prospect was terminated by a range of quaint particoloured hills, which rose before us in such fantastic shapes that I could not take my eyes off them.

I do not know whether it was the strong coffee or the invigorating air that stimulated my imagination; but I certainly felt convinced I was coming to some mystical spot—out of space, out of time—where I should suddenly light upon a green-scaled griffin, or golden-haired princess, as in the olden days. Certainly a more appropriate scene, for such an encounter, could not be conceived than that which displayed itself, when we wheeled at last round the flank of the scorched ridge we had been approaching. A perfectly smooth grassy plain, about a league square, and shaped like a horseshoe, opened before us, encompassed by bare cinder-like hills, that rose round—red, black, and yellow—in a hundred

uncouth peaks of ash and slag. Not a vestige of vegetation relieved the aridity of their vitrified sides, while the verdant carpet at their feet only made the fire-moulded circle seem more weird and impassable. Had I had a trumpet and a lance, I should have blown a blast of defiance on the one, and having shaken the other toward the four corners of the world, would have calmly waited to see what next might betide. Three arrows shot bravely forward would have probably resulted in the discovery of a trapdoor with an iron ring; but having neither trumpet, lance, nor arrow, we simply alighted and lunched.

BURNING MOUNTAINS

After the usual hour's rest and change of horses, we galloped away to the other side of the plain, and suddenly found ourselves in a district as unlike the cinder mountains we had quitted as they had differed from the volcanic scenery of the day before. On the left lay a long rampart of green hills, opening up every now and then into Scottish glens and gorges, while from their roots to the horizon stretched a vast breadth of meadowland, watered by two or three rivers, that wound, and twisted, and coiled about, like blue serpents. Here and there, white volumes of vapour, that rose in endless wreaths from the ground, told of mighty cauldrons at work beneath that moist, cool, verdant carpet; while large silvery lakes, and flat-



topped isolated hills, relieved the monotony of the level land, and carried on the eye to where the three snowy peaks of Mount Hecla shone cold and clear against the sky.

Of course it was rather tantalising to pass so near this famous burning mountain without having an opportunity of ascending it; but the expedition would have taken up too much time. In appearance Hecla differs very little from the innumerable other volcanic hills with which the island is studded. Its cone consists of a pyramid of stone and scoriæ, (cellular lava), rising to the height of about five thousand feet, and welded together by bands of molten matter which have issued from its sides. From A.D. 1004 to 1766 there have been twenty-three eruptions, occurring at intervals which have varied in duration from six to seventy-six years.

The one of 1766 was remarkably violent. It commenced on the 5th of April by the appearance of a huge pillar of black sand mounting slowly into the heavens, accompanied by subterranean thunders, and all the other symptoms which precede volcanic disturbances. Then a coronet of flame encircled the crater; masses of red rock, pumice, and magnetic stones were flung out with tremendous violence to an incredible distance, and in such continuous multitudes as to resemble a swarm of bees clustering over the mountain. One boulder of pumice six feet in circumference was pitched twenty miles away; another of magnetic iron fell at a distance of fifteen.

The surface of the earth was covered, for a circuit

of one hundred and fifty miles, with a layer of sand four inches deep; the air was so darkened by it, that at a place one hundred and forty miles off, white paper held up at a little distance could not be distinguished from black. The fishermen could not put to sea on account of the darkness, and the inhabitants of the Orkney Islands were frightened out of their senses by showers of what they thought must be black snow. On the 9th of April, the lava began to overflow, and ran for five miles in a south-westerly direction, whilst, some days later, a vast column of water, like Robin Hood's second arrow, split up through the cinder pillar to the height of several hundred feet; the horror of the spectacle being further enhanced by an accompaniment of subterranean cannonading and dire reports, heard at a distance of fifty miles.

Striking as all this must have been, it sinks into comparative tameness and insignificance, beside the infinitely more terrible phenomena which attended the eruption of another volcano, called *Skapta Jokul*.

Of all countries in Europe, Iceland is the one which has been the most minutely mapped, not even excepting the ordnance survey of Ireland. The Danish Government seem to have had a hobby about it, and the result has been a chart so beautifully executed, that every little crevice, each mountain torrent, each flood of lava, is laid down with an accuracy perfectly astonishing. The engineer has succeeded in penetrating to every other part of the island, except one vast space of

about four hundred square miles. Over the area occupied by the Skapta Jokul, amid its mountain-cradled fields of snow and icy ridges, no human foot has ever wandered. Yet it is from the bosom of this desert district that has descended the most frightful visitation ever known to have desolated the island.

This event occurred in the year 1783. The preceding winter and spring had been unusually mild. Toward the end of May, a light bluish fog began to float along the confines of the untrodden tracts of Skapta, accompanied in the beginning of June by a great trembling of the earth. On the 8th of that month, immense pillars of smoke collected over the hill country towards the north, and coming down against the wind in a southerly direction, enveloped the whole district in darkness. A whirlwind of ashes then swept over the face of the country, and on the 10th, innumerable fire spouts were seen leaping and flaring amid the icy hollows of the mountain, while the River Skapta, one of the largest in the island, having first rolled down to the plain a vast volume of fetid waters mixed with sand, suddenly disappeared.

Two days afterwards a stream of lava, issuing from sources to which no one has ever been able to penetrate, came sliding down the bed of the dried-up river, and in a little time—though the channel was six hundred feet deep and two hundred broad—the glowing deluge overflowed its banks, crossed the low country, ripping the turf up before it like a tablecloth, and poured into a great lake

whose affrighted waters flew hissing and screaming into the air at the approach of the fiery intruder. Within a few more days the basin of the lake itself was completely filled, and having separated into two streams, the unexhausted torrent again recommenced its march; in one direction overflowing some ancient lava fields,—in the other, re-entering the channel of the Skapta, and leaping down the lofty cataract. But this was not all; while one lava flood had chosen the Skapta for its bed, another, descending in a different direction, was working like ruin within and on either side the banks of a river, rushing into the plain, by all accounts, with even greater fury and velocity.

Whether the two issued from the same crater it is impossible to say; as the sources of both were far away within the heart of the unapproachable desert, and even the extent of the lava flow can only be measured from the spot where it entered the inhabited districts. The stream which flowed down Skapta is calculated to be about fifty miles in length by twelve or fifteen at its greatest breadth; that which rolled down the other river, at forty miles in length by seven in breadth. Where it was imprisoned, between the high banks of Skapta, the lava is five or six hundred feet thick; but as soon as it spread out into the plain its depth never exceeded one hundred feet. The eruption of sand, ashes, pumice, and lava continued till the end of August, when the drama concluded with a violent earthquake.

For a whole year a canopy of cinder-laden cloud



AN ICELANDIC LAVA FIELD

hung over the island. Sand and ashes irretrievably overwhelmed thousands of acres of fertile pasturage. The Faroe Islands, the Shetlands, and the Orkneys were deluged with volcanic dust, which contaminated even the pure skies of England and Holland. Poisonous vapours tainted the atmosphere of the entire island;—even the grass, which no cinder rain had stifled, completely withered up;—the fish perished in the poisoned sea. A murrain broke out among the cattle, and a disease resembling scurvy attacked the inhabitants themselves. Stephenson had calculated that 9000 men, 28,000 horses, 11,000 cattle, 190,000 sheep, died from the effects of this one eruption. The most moderate calculation puts the number of human deaths at upwards of 1300; and of cattle, etc., at about 156,000. •

The whole of this century had proved most fatal to the unfortunate people of Iceland. At its commencement smallpox destroyed more than 16,000 persons; nearly 10,000 more perished by a famine consequent on a succession of inclement seasons; while from time to time the southern coasts were considerably depopulated by the incursions of English and even Algerine pirates.

BOILING FOUNTAINS (GEYSIRS)

The rest of our day's journey lay through a country less interesting than the district we had traversed before luncheon. For the most part we

kept on along the foot of the hills, stopping now and then for a drink of milk at the occasional farms perched upon their slopes. Sometimes turning up a green and even bushy glen, (there are no trees in Iceland, the nearest approach to anything of the kind being a low dwarf birch, hardly worthy of being called a shrub), we would cut across the shoulder of some projecting spur, and obtain a wider prospect of the level land upon our right; or else keeping more down in the flat, we had to flounder for half an hour up to the horses' shoulders in an Irish bog. After about five hours of this work we reached the banks of a broad and rather singular river. Halfway across it was perfectly fordable; but exactly in the middle was a deep cleft, into which the waters from either side spilt themselves, and then in a collected volume roared over a precipice a little lower down. Across this cleft some wooden planks were thrown, giving the traveller an opportunity of boasting that he had crossed a river on a bridge which itself was under water.

By this time we had all begun to be very tired, and very hungry;—it was 11 o'clock p.m. We had been twelve or thirteen hours on horseback, not to mention occasional half-hours of pretty severe walking after the ptarmigan and plover. Many were the questions we addressed to Sigurdr on the distance yet remaining, and many the conjectures we hazarded as to whether the cook would have arrived in time to get dinner ready for us. At last, after another two hours' weary jogging,

we descried, straight in front, a low steep brown rugged hill, standing entirely detached from the range at the foot of which we had been riding; and in a few minutes more, wheeling round its outer end, we found ourselves in the presence of the steaming Geysirs.

I do not know that I can give you a better notion of the appearance of the place than by saying that it looked as if—for about a quarter of a mile—the ground had been honeycombed by disease into numerous sores and orifices; not a blade of grass grew on its hot, inflamed surface, which consisted of unwholesome-looking red livid clay, or crumpled shreds and shards of slough-like incrustations. Naturally enough, our first impulse on dismounting was to scamper off at once to the Great Geysir. As it lay at the farthest end of the congeries of hot springs, in order to reach it we had to run the gauntlet of all the pools of boiling water and scalding quagmires of soft clay that intervened, and consequently arrived on the spot with our ankles nicely poulticed. But the occasion justified our eagerness. A smooth basin, seventy-two feet in diameter and four feet deep, with a hole at the bottom as in a washing-basin on board a steamer, stood before us brimful of water just upon the simmer; while up into the air above our heads rose a great column of vapour. The ground about the brim was composed of layers of incrustated silica, like the outside of an oyster, sloping gently down on all sides from the edge of the basin.

Having satisfied our curiosity with this cursory inspection of what we had come so far to see, hunger compelled us to look about with great anxiety for the cook; and you may fancy our delight at seeing that functionary in the very act of dishing up dinner on a neighbouring hillock. Sent forward at an early hour, under the chaperonage of a guide, he had arrived about two hours before us, and seizing with a general's eye the key of the position, at once turned an idle babbling little Geysir into a camp kettle, dug a bakehouse in the hot soft clay, and improvising a kitchen range at a neighbouring vent, had made himself completely master of the situation. It was about one o'clock in the morning when we sat down to dinner, and as light as day.

As the baggage train with our tents and beds had not yet arrived, we fully appreciated our luck in being treated to so dry a night; and having eaten everything we could lay hands on, we had sat quietly down to chess, and coffee brewed in Geysir water; when suddenly it seemed as if beneath our very feet a quantity of subterraneous cannon were going off; the whole earth shook, and Sigurdr, starting to his feet, upset the chessboard (I was just beginning to get the best of the game), and flung off full speed towards the great basin. By the time we reached its brim, however, the noise had ceased, and all we could see was a slight movement in the centre, as if an angel had passed by and troubled the water. Irritated at this false alarm, we deter-

mined to revenge ourselves by going and tormenting the Strokr.¹

Strokr—or *the churn*—you must know, is an unfortunate Geysir, with so little command over



PIPE OF A GEYSIR

his temper and his stomach, that you can get a *rise* out of him whenever you like. All that is necessary is to collect a quantity of sods, and throw them down his funnel. As he has no basin to

¹ This geysir Strokr (or Strokkur) *disappeared* during the earthquake of 1896, though other geysirs were born at the time.

protect him from these liberties, you can approach to the very edge of the pipe, about five feet in diameter, and look down at the boiling water which is perpetually seething at the bottom. In a few minutes the dose of turf you have just administered begins to disagree with him; he works himself up into an awful passion—tormented by the qualms of incipient sickness, he groans and hisses, and boils up, and spits at you with malicious vehemence, until at last, with a roar of mingled pain and rage, he throws up into the air a column of water forty feet high, which carries with it all the sods that have been chucked in, and scatters them scalded and half-digested at your feet. So irritated has the poor thing's stomach become by the discipline it has undergone, that even long after all the foreign matter has been thrown off, it goes on retching and sputtering, until at last nature is exhausted, when, sobbing and sighing to itself, it sinks back into the bottom of its den.

Put into the highest spirits by the success of this performance, we turned away to examine the remaining springs. I do not know, however, that any of the rest are worthy of particular mention. They all resemble in character the two I have described, the only difference being that they are infinitely smaller, and of much less power and importance. One other remarkable formation in the neighbourhood must not be passed unnoticed. Imagine a large irregular opening in the surface of the soft white clay, filled to the very brim with scalding water, perfectly still, and of a bright blue

colour, through whose transparent depths you can see down into the mouth of a vast cavern, which runs, Heaven knows how far, in a horizontal direction beneath your feet. Its walls and varied cavities really looked as if they were built of the purest lapis lazuli—and so thin seemed the crust that roofed it in, we almost fancied it might break through, and tumble us all into the fearful beautiful bath.

Having by this time taken a pretty good look at the principal features of our new domain, I wrapped myself up in a cloak and went to sleep; leaving orders that I should not be called until after the tent had arrived, and our beds were ready. Sigurdr followed my example, but the Doctor went out shooting.

As our principal object in coming so far was to see an eruption of the Great Geysir, it was of course necessary we should wait his pleasure; in fact, our movements entirely depended upon his. For the next two or three days, therefore, like pilgrims round some ancient shrine, we patiently kept watch. Two or three times the cannonading we had heard immediately after our arrival recommenced—and once an eruption to the height of about ten feet occurred; but so brief was its duration, that by the time we were on the spot, although the tent was not eighty yards distant, all was over. As after every effort of the fountain the water in the basin mysteriously ebbs back into the funnel, this performance, though unsatisfactory in itself, gave us an opportunity of approaching

the mouth of the pipe, and looking down into its scalded gullet. In an hour afterwards, the basin was brimful as ever.

We had to while away the hours as best we could. We played chess, collected specimens, photographed the encampment, the guides, the ponies, and one or two astonished natives. Every now and then we went out shooting over the neighbouring flats, and once I ventured on a longer expedition among the mountains to our left. The views I got were beautiful,—ridge rising beyond ridge in eternal silence, like gigantic ocean waves, whose tumult has been suddenly frozen into stone;—but the dread of the Geysir going off during my absence made me almost too fidgety to enjoy them. The weather luckily remained beautiful, with the exception of one little spell of rain, which came to make us all the more grateful for the sunshine,—and we fed like princes. Independently of the game, duck, plover, ptarmigan, and bittern, with which our guns supplied us, a young lamb was always in the larder,—not to mention reindeer tongues, skier, —a kind of sour curds, excellent when well made,—milk, cheese whose taste and nature baffles description, biscuit and bread, sent us as a free gift by the lady of a neighbouring farm. In fact, so noble is Icelandic hospitality, that I really believe there was nothing within fifty miles round we might not have obtained for the asking, had we desired it.

We had now been keeping watch for three days over the Geysir, in languid expectation of the eruption which was to set us free. All the morning

of the fourth day I had been playing chess with Sigurdr; Fitzgerald was photographing, Wilson was in the act of announcing luncheon, when a cry from the guides made us start to our feet, and with one common impulse rush towards the basin. The usual subterranean thunders had already commenced. A violent agitation was disturbing the centre of the pool. Suddenly a dome of water lifted itself up to the height of eight or ten feet,—then burst, and fell; immediately after which a shining liquid column, or rather a sheaf of columns wreathed in robes of vapour, sprang into the air, and in a succession of jerking leaps, each higher than the last, flung their silver crests against the sky. For a few minutes the fountain held its own, then all at once appeared to lose its ascending energy. The unstable waters faltered, drooped, fell, “like a broken purpose,” back upon themselves and were immediately sucked down into the recesses of their pipe.

The spectacle was certainly magnificent; but no description can give any idea of its most striking features. The enormous wealth of water, its vitality, its hidden power,—the illimitable breadth of sunlit vapour, rolling out in exhaustless profusion,—all combined to make one feel the stupendous energy of nature’s slightest movements.

And yet I do not believe the exhibition was so fine as some that have been seen: from the first burst upwards to the moment the last jet retreated into the pipe, was no more than a space of seven or eight minutes, and at no moment did the crown of the

column reach higher than sixty or seventy feet above the surface of the basin. Now, early travellers talk of three hundred feet, which must, of course, be fabulous; but many trustworthy persons have judged the eruptions at two hundred feet.

The last gulp of water had disappeared down the funnel. We were standing at the bottom of the now empty basin, gazing into each other's faces with joyous astonishment, when suddenly we perceived a horseman come frantically galloping round the base of the neighbouring hill towards us. The state of the case was only too evident. He had seen the masses of vapour rising round the fountain, and guessing "what was *up*," had strained every nerve to arrive in time.

Occupying the door of my tent, by way of vantage ground, as soon as the stranger was come within earshot, I lifted up my voice, and cried in a style of Arabian familiarity, "O thou that ridest so furiously,—weary and disappointed one,—turn in, I pray thee, into the tent of thy servant, and eat bread, and drink wine, that thy soul may be comforted." To which he answered and said, "Man,—dweller in sulphureous places,—I will not eat bread, nor drink wine, neither will I enter into thy tent, until I have measured out a resting place for my Lord the Prince."

At this interesting moment our acquaintance was interrupted by the appearance of two other horsemen—the one a painter, the other a geologist—attached to the expedition of Prince Napoleon. They informed us that His Imperial Highness had

reached Reykjavik two days after we had left, that he had encamped last at Thingvalla, and might be expected here in about four hours; they themselves having come on in advance to prepare for his arrival. My first care was to order coffee for the tired Frenchmen; and then—feeling that long residence having given us a kind of proprietorship in the Geysirs, we were bound to do the honours of the place to the approaching band of travellers,—I summoned the cook, and enlarging in a long speech on the gravity of the occasion, gave orders that he should make a holocaust of all the remaining game, and get under way a plumpudding whose dimensions should do himself and England credit. A long table having been erected within the tent, Sigurdr started on a plundering expedition to the neighbouring farm, Fitzgerald undertook the ordering of the feast, while I rode on my pony across the morass, in hopes of being able to shoot a few additional plover.

In a couple of hours afterwards, just as I was stalking a duck that lay innocently basking on the bosom of the river, a cloud of horsemen swept round the base of the distant mountain, and returning home, I found the encampment I had left so deserted, alive and populous with as merry a group of Frenchmen as it might ever be one's fortune to fall in with. Of course they were dressed in every variety of costumes, long boots, picturesque brigand-looking hats, with here and there a sprinkling of Scotch caps from Aberdeen; but—whatever might be the headdress, underneath

you might be sure to find a kindly, cheery face. My old friend Count Trampe, who had accompanied the expedition, at once presented me to the Prince, who was engaged in sounding the depth of the pipe of the Great Geysir, — and encouraged by the



PRINCE NAPOLEON

gracious reception which His Imperial Highness accorded me, I ventured to inform him that “there was a poor banquet toward,” of which I trusted he—and as many of his officers as the table could hold—would condescend to partake.

Although I never had the pleasure of seeing Prince Napoleon before, I should have known him

among a thousand, from his remarkable likeness to his uncle, the first Emperor. A stronger resemblance, I conceive, could scarcely exist between two persons. The same delicate, sharply cut features, thin refined mouth, and firm determined jaw. The Prince's frame, however, is built altogether on a larger scale, and his eyes, instead of being a cold piercing blue, are soft and brown, with quite a different expression.

The dinner went off very well, as every dinner must do where such merry companions dine together. We had some difficulty about stowing away the legs of a tall philosopher, and to each knife three individuals were told off; but the birds were not badly cooked, and the plumpudding arrived in time to convert a questionable success into an undoubted triumph.

On rising from table, each one strolled away in whatever direction his particular taste suggested. The painter to sketch; the geologist to break stones; and the rest to superintend the erection of the tents which had just arrived.

In an hour afterwards, sleep—though not altogether silence—for loud and strong rose the choral service intoned to Morpheus¹ from every side—reigned supreme over the encampment.

The next morning the whole encampment was stirring at an early hour with preparations for departure.

* * * * *

Of our return journey to Reykjavik I think I

¹ The god of sleep.

have no very interesting particulars to give you. I had sent on cook, baggage, and guides, some hours before we ourselves started, so that on our arrival we found a dry, cosy tent, and a warm dinner awaiting us. The rapid transformation of the aspect of the country, which I had just witnessed, made me quite understand how completely the success of an expedition in Iceland must depend on the weather, and fully accounted for the difference I had observed in the amount of enjoyment different travellers seemed to have derived from it. It is one thing to ride forty miles a day through the most singular scenery in the world, when a radiant sun brings out every feature of the country into startling distinctness, and another to plod over the same forty miles, drenched to the skin, seeing nothing but the dim, grey roots of hills, that rise you know not how, and you care not where,—with no better employment than to look at your watch, and wonder when you shall reach your journey's end.

If, in addition to this, you have to wait, as very often must be the case, for many hours after your own arrival, wet, tired, hungry, until the baggage train, with the tents and food, shall have come up, with no alternative in the meantime but to lie shivering inside a grass-roofed church, or to share the quarters of some farmer's family, whose domestic arrangements resemble in every particular those which Macaulay describes as prevailing among the Scottish Highlanders a hundred years ago; and, if finally—after vainly waiting for some days

to see an eruption which never takes place—you journey back to Reykjavik under the same melancholy conditions,—it will not be unnatural that, on returning to your native land, you should proclaim Iceland, with her Geysirs, to be a sham, a delusion, and a snare !

Fortune, however, seemed determined that of these bitternesses we should not taste; for the next morning, bright and joyous overhead bent the blue unclouded heaven; while the plain lay gleaming at our feet in all the brilliancy of enamel. I was sorely tempted to linger another day in the neighbourhood; but we have already spent more time upon the Geysirs than I had counted upon, and it will not do to remain in Iceland longer than the fifteenth, or Winter will have begun to barricade the 'passes' into his Arctic dominions. My plan, on returning to Reykjavik, is to send the schooner round to wait for us in a harbour on the north coast of the island, while we ourselves strike straight across the interior on horseback.

The scenery, I am told, is magnificent. On the way we shall pass many a little nook, shut up among the hills, that has been consecrated by some touching old-world story; and the manner of life among the northern inhabitants is, I believe, more unchanged and characteristic than that of any other of the islanders. Moreover, scarcely any stranger has ever penetrated to any distance in this direction; and we shall have an opportunity of traversing a slice of that tremendous desert—piled up for thirty thousand square miles in disordered

pyramids of ice and lava over the centre of the country, and periodically devastated by deluges of molten stone and boiling mud, or overwhelmed with whirlwinds of intermingled snow and cinders,—an unfinished corner of the universe, where the elements of chaos are still allowed to rage with unbridled fury.

Our last stage from Thingvalla back to Reykjavik was got over very quickly, and seemed an infinitely shorter distance than when we first performed it. We met a number of farmers returning to their homes from a kind of fair that is annually held in the little metropolis; and as I watched the long caravan-like line of pack horses and horsemen, wearily plodding over the stone waste in single file, I found it less difficult to believe that these remote islanders should be descended from Oriental forefathers. In fact, one is constantly reminded of the East in Iceland. From the earliest ages the Icelanders have been a people dwelling in tents. In the time of the ancient Parliament, the legislators, during the entire session, lay encamped in movable booths around the place of meeting. No Arab could be prouder of his courser than they are of their little ponies, or reverence more deeply the sacred rights of hospitality; while the solemn salutation exchanged between two companies of travellers, passing each other in the *desert*—as they invariably call the uninhabited part of the country—would not have disbecome the stately courtesy of the most ancient worshippers of the sun.

Anything more multifarious than the lading of these caravans we met returning to the inland



THE MAIL CARAVAN

districts, cannot well be conceived : deal boards, rope, kegs of brandy, sacks of rye or wheaten flour, salt, soap, sugar, snuff, tobacco, coffee ; everything, in fact, which was necessary to their domestic consumption during the ensuing winter. In exchange for these commodities, which of course they are obliged to get from Europe, the Icelanders export raw wool, knitted stockings, mittens, cured cod, and fish oil, whale blubber, fox skins, eider-down, feathers, and Icelandic moss. During the last few years the exports of the island have amounted to about 1,200,000 lb. of wool and 500,000 pairs of stockings and mittens. Although Iceland is one-fifth larger than Ireland, its population consists of only about 60,000 persons, scattered along the habitable ring which runs round between the central desert and the sea ; of the whole area of 38,000 square miles it is calculated that not more than one-eighth part is occupied, the remaining 33,000 square miles consisting of naked mountains of ice, or valleys desolated by lava or volcanic ashes. Even Reykjavik itself cannot boast of more than 700 or 800 inhabitants.

During winter-time the men are chiefly employed in tending cattle, picking wool, manufacturing ropes, bridles, saddles, and building boats. The fishing season commences in spring ; in 1853 there were as many as 3500 boats engaged upon the water. As summer advances, turf-cutting and haymaking begins ; while the autumn months are principally devoted to the repairing of their houses, manuring the grass-lands, and killing and curing

of sheep for exportation, as well as for their own use during the winter. The womankind of a family occupy themselves throughout the year in washing, carding, and spinning wool, in knitting gloves and stockings, and in weaving frieze and flannel for their own wear.

The ordinary food of a well-to-do Icelandic family consists of dried fish, butter, sour whey kept till fermentation takes place, curds, and skier—a very peculiar cheese unlike any I ever tasted,—a little mutton, and rye bread. As might be expected, this meagre fare is not very conducive to health; scurvy and leprosy are very common, while the practice of mothers to leave off nursing their children at the end of three days, feeding them with cows' milk instead, results in a frightful mortality among the babies.

Land is held either in fee-simple, or let by the Crown to tenants on what may almost be considered perpetual leases. The rent is calculated partly on the number of acres occupied, partly on the head of cattle the farm is fit to support, and is paid in kind, either in fish or farm produce. Tenants in easy circumstances generally employ two or three labourers, who—in addition to their board and lodging—receive from ten to twelve dollars a year of wages. No property can be entailed, and if any one dies intestate, what he leaves is distributed among his children—in equal shares to the sons, in half-shares to the daughters.

The clergy are paid by tithes; their stipends are exceedingly small, generally not averaging more

than six or seven pounds sterling per annum; their chief dependence being upon their farms. Like St. Dunstan, they are invariably excellent blacksmiths.

As we approached Reykjavik, for the first time during the whole journey we began to have some little trouble with the relay of ponies in front. Whether it was that they were tired, or that they had arrived in a district where they had been accustomed to roam at large, I cannot tell; but every ten minutes, during the last six or seven miles, one or other of them kept starting aside into the rocky plain, across which the narrow bridle-road was carried, and cost us many a weary chase before we could drive them into the track again. At last, though not till I had been violently hugged, kissed, and nearly pulled off my horse by an enthusiastic and rather tipsy farmer, who mistook me for the Prince, we galloped, about five o'clock, triumphantly into the town, without an accident having occurred to man or horse during the whole course of the expedition—always excepting one tremendous fall sustained by Wilson.

It was on the evening of the day we left the Geysirs. We were all galloping along in single file down the lava pathway, when suddenly I heard a cry behind me, and then the noise as of a descending avalanche. On turning round, behold! both Wilson and his pony lay stretched upon the ground, the first some yards in advance of the other. The poor fellow evidently thought he was killed; for he neither spoke nor stirred, but lay looking up at me, with blank, beady eyes as I approached to his

assistance. On further investigation, neither of the sufferers proved to be a bit the worse.

The cook, and the rest of the party, did not arrive till about midnight; but I make no doubt that when that able and spirited individual did at length reascend the side of the schooner, his cheek must have burned with pride at the reflection, that during the short period of his absence on shore he had added to his other accomplishments that of becoming a most finished cavalier. I do not mean by that to imply that he was at all *done*.

Although we had enjoyed our trip so much, I was not sorry to find myself on board. The descent again, after our gipsy life, into the coquettish little cabin, with its books and dear home faces, quite penetrated me with that feeling of snug content of which I believe Englishmen alone are susceptible.

I give up seeing the rest of Iceland, and go North at once. It has cost me a struggle to come to this conclusion, but on the whole I think it will be better. Ten or fifteen days of summer-time become very precious in these latitudes, and are worth a sacrifice. At this moment we have just brought up astern of the *Reine Hortense*, and are getting our hawsers bent, ready for a start in half an hour's time. My next letter, please God, will be dated from Hammerfest. I suppose I shall be about fifteen or twenty days getting there, but this will depend on the state of the ice about Jan Mayen. If the anchorage is clear, I shall spend a few days in examining the island, which by all accounts would appear to be most curious.

IV

THE LAPLANDERS

IT was in the streets of Hammerfest that I first set eyes on a Laplander. Turning round the corner of one of the ill-built houses, we suddenly ran over a diminutive little personage, in a white woollen tunic, bordered with red and yellow stripes, green trousers, fastened round the ankles, and reindeer boots, curving up at the toes like Turkish slippers. On her head—for, notwithstanding the trousers, she turned out to be a lady—was perched a gay parti-coloured cap, fitting close round the face, and running up at the back into an over-arching peak of red cloth. Within this peak was crammed—as I afterwards learnt—a piece of hollow wood, weighing about a quarter of a pound, into which is fitted the wearer's back hair.

Hardly had we taken off our hats, and bowed a thousand apologies for our unintentional rudeness to the fair inhabitant of the green trousers, before a couple of Lapp gentlemen hove in sight. They were dressed pretty much like their companion, except that an ordinary red night-cap replaced the queer helmet worn by the lady; and the knife and sporran¹ fastened to their belts, instead of being

¹ Fur-covered pouch.

suspended in front as hers were, hung down against their hips. Their tunics, too, may have been a trifle shorter.

None of the three were beautiful. High cheek-bones, short noses, oblique eyes, no eyelashes, and enormous mouths, composed a cast of features which their burnt-sienna complexion, and hair—like ill-got hay—did not much enhance. The expression of their countenances was not unintelligent; and there was a merry, half-timid, half-cunning twinkle in their eyes, which reminded me a little of faces I had met with in the more neglected districts of Ireland.

Their acquaintance with any sacred history—nay, with Christianity at all—is very limited. It was not until after the thirteenth century that an attempt was made to convert them; and to this very day a great proportion of the race are Pagans. When a couple is to be married, if a priest happens to be in the way, they will send for him; but otherwise, the young lady's papa merely strikes a flint and steel together, and the ceremony is complete. When they die, a hatchet and a flint and steel are invariably buried with the bodies, in case they should find themselves chilly on their long journey. When they go bear-hunting—the most important business in their lives—it is a sorcerer who marches at the head of the procession. In the internal arrangements of their tents, it is not a room to themselves, but a door to themselves, that they assign to their womankind; for woe betide the hunter if a woman has crossed the threshold over which he sallies

to the chase; and for three days after the slaughter of his prey he must live apart from the female portion of his family, in order to appease the evil deity whose familiar he is supposed to have destroyed.

Their manner of life I had scarcely any opportunities of observing. Our Consul kindly undertook to take us to one of their encampments; but they flit so often from place to place it is very difficult to light upon them. Here and there, as we cruised about among the fiords, blue wreaths of smoke rising from some little green nook among the rocks would betray their temporary place of abode; but I never got a near view of a regular settlement.

In the summer-time they live in canvas tents; during winter, when the snow is on the ground, the forest Lapps build huts in the branches of trees, and so roost like birds. The principal tent is of an hexagonal form, with a fire in the centre, whose smoke rises through a hole in the roof. The gentlemen and ladies occupy different sides of the same apartment. Hunting and fishing are the principal employments of the Lapp tribes; and to slay a bear is the most honourable exploit a Lapp hero can achieve. The flesh of the slaughtered beast becomes the property, not of the man who killed him, but of him who discovered his trail; and the skin is hung up on a pole for the wives of all who took part in the expedition to shoot at with their eyes bandaged. Fortunate is she whose arrow pierces the trophy—not only does it become her prize, but in the eyes of the whole settlement

her husband is looked upon thenceforth as the most fortunate of men. As long as the chase is going on, the women are not allowed to stir abroad;



A FAMILY OF LAPPS AND THEIR TENT

but as soon as the party have safely brought home their booty, the whole female population issues from the tents, and having deliberately chewed

some bark of a species of alder, they spit the red juice into their husbands' faces, typifying thereby the bear's blood which has been shed in honourable encounter.

Although the forest, the rivers, and the sea supply them in a great measure with their food, it is upon the reindeer that the Laplander is dependent for every other comfort in life. The reindeer is his estate, his horse, his cow, his companion, and his friend. He has twenty-two different names for him. His coat, trousers, and shoes are made of reindeer's skin, stitched with thread manufactured from the nerves and sinews of the reindeer. Reindeer milk is the most important item in his diet. Out of reindeer horns are made almost all the utensils used in his domestic economy; and it is the reindeer that carries his baggage and drags his sledge.

But the beauty of this animal is by no means on a par with his various moral and physical endowments. His antlers, indeed, are magnificent, branching back to the length of three or four feet; but his body is poor, and his limbs thick and ungainly: neither is his pace quite so rapid as is generally supposed.

The Laplanders count distances by the number of horizons they have traversed; and if a reindeer changes the horizon three times during the twenty-four hours, it is thought a good day's work. Moreover, so just an appreciation has the creature of what is due to his great merit, that if his owner seeks to tax him beyond his strength, he not only

becomes restive, but sometimes actually turns upon the man who has overdriven him. When, therefore, a Lapp is in a great hurry, instead of taking to his sledge, he puts on a pair of skates exactly twice as long as his own body, and so flies on the wings of the wind.

Every Laplander, however poor, has his dozen or two dozen deer; and the flocks of a rich Lapp amount sometimes to two thousand head. As soon as a young lady is born—after having been duly rolled in the snow—she is dowered by her father with a certain number of deer, which are immediately branded with her initials, and thenceforth kept apart as her especial property. In proportion as they increase and multiply does her chance improve of making a good match.

Lapp courtships are conducted pretty much in the same fashion as in other parts of the world. The lover, as soon as he discovers that he has lost his heart, goes off in search of a friend and a bottle of brandy. The friend enters the tent, and opens simultaneously the brandy and his business; while the lover remains outside, engaged in hewing wood, or some other menial employment. If after the brandy and the proposal have been duly discussed, the eloquence of his friend prevails, he is himself called into the conclave, and the young people are allowed to rub noses. The bride then accepts from her suitor a present of a reindeer's tongue, and the espousals are considered concluded. The marriage does not take place for two or three years afterwards; and during the interval the



LAPP BRIDEGROOM BRINGING HOME HIS BRIDE

intended is obliged to labour in the service of his father-in-law as diligently as Jacob served Laban for the sake of his long-loved Rachel.

I cannot better conclude this summary of what I have been able to learn about the honest Lapps than by sending you the tourist's stock specimen of a Lapp love-ditty. The author is supposed to be hastening in his sledge towards the home of his adored one :—

“Hasten, Kulnasatz ! my little reindeer ! long is the way, and boundless are the marshes. Swift are we, and light of foot, and soon we shall have come to whither we are speeding. There shall I behold my fair one pacing. Kulnasatz, my reindeer, look forth ! look around ! Dost thou not see her somewhere—*bathing ?*”

As soon as we had thoroughly looked at the Lapp lady and her companions, we proceeded to inspect the other lions of the town ; the church, the lazar-house—principally occupied by Lapps—the stock fish establishment, and the hotel. But a very few hours were sufficient to exhaust the pleasures of Hammerfest ; so having bought an extra suit of jerseys for my people, and laid in a supply of other necessities, likely to be useful in our cruise to Spitzbergen, we exchanged dinners with the Consul, a transaction by which, I fear, he got the worst of the bargain, and then got under weigh for this place—Alten.

The very day we left Hammerfest our hopes of being able to get to Spitzbergen at all received a tremendous shock. We had just sat down to dinner, and I was helping the Consul to fish, when

in comes Wilson, his face, as usual, upside down, and hisses something into the Doctor's ear. Ever since the famous dialogue which had taken place between them on the subject of sea-sickness, Wilson had got to look upon Fitz as in some sort his legitimate prey, and whenever the burden of his own misgivings became greater than he could bear, it was to the Doctor that he unbosomed himself. On this occasion, I guessed, by the look of gloomy triumph in his eyes, that some great calamity had occurred, and it turned out that the following was the agreeable announcement he had been in such haste to make: "Do you know, Sir?"—This was always the preface to tidings unusually doleful. "No—what?" said the Doctor, breathless. "Oh, nothing, Sir; only two sloops have just arrived, Sir, from Spitzbergen, Sir—where they couldn't get, Sir; such a precious lot of ice—two hundred miles from the land—and, oh, Sir—they've come back with all their bows stove in!"

V

A VISIT TO SPITZBERGEN

It was at one o'clock in the morning of the 6th of August, 1856, that, after having been eleven days at sea, we came to an anchor in the silent haven of English Bay, *Spitzbergen*.

And now, how shall I give you an idea of the wonderful panorama in the midst of which we found ourselves? I think, perhaps, its most striking feature was the stillness—and deadness—and impassibility of this new world: ice, and rock, and water surrounded us; not a sound of any kind interrupted the silence; the sea did not break upon the shore; no bird or any living thing was visible; the midnight sun—by this time muffled in a transparent mist—shed an awful, mysterious lustre on glacier and mountain; no atom of vegetation gave token of the earth's vitality; a universal numbness and dumbness seemed to pervade the solitude.

I suppose in scarcely any other part of the world is this appearance of deadness so strikingly exhibited. On the stillest summer day in England, there is always perceptible an undertone of life thrilling through the atmosphere; and though no breeze should stir a single leaf, yet there is always a sense of growth; but here not so much as a blade of grass

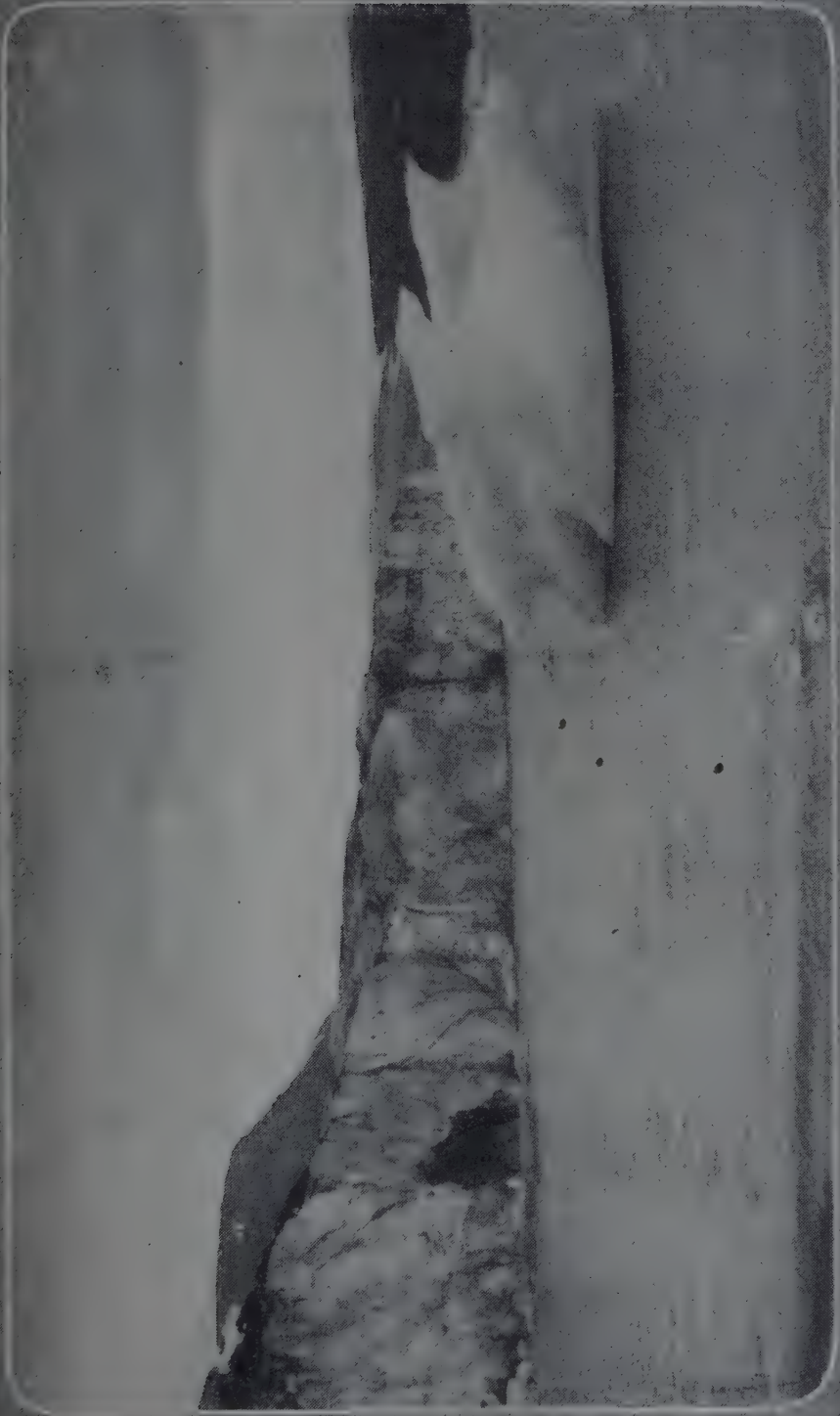
was to be seen on the sides of the bald hills. Primeval rocks—and eternal ice—constitute the landscape.

The anchorage where we had brought up is the best to be found, with the exception perhaps of Magdalena Bay, along the whole west coast of Spitzbergen; indeed it is almost the only one where you are not liable to have the ice set in upon you at a moment's notice. Ice Sound, Bell Sound, Horn Sound—the other harbours along the west coast—are all liable to be beset by drifting ice during the course of a single night, even though no vestige of it may have been in sight four-and-twenty hours before; and many a good ship has been imprisoned in the very harbour to which she had fled for refuge. The bay is completely landlocked, being protected on its open side by Prince Charles's Foreland, a long island lying parallel with the mainland. Down towards either horn run two ranges of rocks about 1500 feet high, their sides almost precipitous, and the topmost ridge as sharp as a knife and jagged as a saw; the intervening space is entirely filled up by an enormous glacier, which rolls at last into the sea. The length of the glacial river from the spot where it apparently first originated could not have been less than thirty or thirty-five miles; or its greatest breadth less than nine or ten; but so completely did it fill up the higher end of the valley that it was as much as you could do to distinguish the further mountains peeping up above its surface. The height of the precipice where it fell into the sea I should judge to have been about 120 feet. •

On the left a still more extraordinary sight presented itself. A kind of baby glacier actually hung suspended half way on the hill-side, like a tear in the act of rolling down the furrowed cheek of the mountain. So strange did it seem that the overhanging mass of ice should not continue to thunder down upon its course, that one's natural impulse was to shrink from crossing the path along which a breath—a sound—might precipitate the suspended avalanche into the valley.

These glaciers are the principal characteristic of the scenery on Spitzbergen; the bottom of every valley, in every part of the island, is occupied and generally completely filled by them, enabling me in some measure to realise the look of England during her glacial period, when Snowdon was still being slowly lifted towards the clouds, and every valley in Wales was brimful of ice.

But the glaciers in English Bay are by no means the largest in the island. We ourselves got a view—though a very distant one—of ice rivers which must have been more extensive; and Dr. Scoresby mentions several which actually measured forty or fifty miles in length, and nine or ten in breadth; while the precipice formed by their fall into the sea was sometimes upwards of 400 or 500 feet high. Nothing is more dangerous than to approach these cliffs of ice. Every now and then huge masses detach themselves from the face of the crystal steep, and topple over into the water; and woe be to the unfortunate ship which might happen to be passing below. Scoresby himself actually witnessed



AN ICEBERG BROKEN FROM A GLACIER

a mass of ice, the size of a cathedral, thunder down into the sea from a height of 400 feet; frequently during our stay in Spitzbergen we ourselves observed specimens of these ice avalanches; and scarcely an hour passed without the solemn silence of the bay being disturbed by the thunderous boom resulting from similar catastrophes occurring in adjacent valleys.

As soon as we had thoroughly taken in the strange features of the scene around us, we all turned in for a night's rest. I was dog tired, as much with anxiety as want of sleep; for in continuing to push on to the northward in spite of the ice, I naturally could not help feeling that if any accident occurred the responsibility would rest with me: and although I do not believe that we were at any time in any real danger, yet from our inexperience in the peculiarities of arctic navigation, I think the coolest judgment would have been liable to occasional misgivings as to what might arise from possible contingencies. Now, however, all was right; we had reached the so longed-for goal; and as I stowed myself snugly away in the hollow of my cot, I could not help heartily congratulating myself that—for that night at all events—there was no danger of the ship knocking a hole in her bottom against some hummock which the look-out had been too sleepy to observe; and that Wilson could not come in the next morning and announce “ice all round, a-all ro-ound!” For a quarter of an hour afterwards all was still on board the *Foam*; and the lonely little ship lay floating on the glassy

bosom of the sea, apparently as inanimate as the landscape.

My feelings on awakening next morning were very pleasant; something like what one used to feel the first morning after one's return from school, on seeing pink curtains glistening round one's head instead of the dirty-white boards of a turn-up bedstead. When Wilson came in with my hot water, I could not help triumphantly remarking to him, "Well, Wilson, you see we've got to Spitzbergen after all!" But Wilson was not a man to be driven from his convictions by facts; he only smiled grimly, with a look which meant, "Would we were safe back again!"

Immediately after breakfast we pulled to the shore, carrying in the gig with us the photographic apparatus, tents, guns, ammunition, and the goat. Poor old thing! she had suffered dreadfully from sea-sickness, and I thought a run ashore might do her good. On the left-hand side of the bay, between the foot of the mountain and the sea, there ran a low flat belt of black moss, about half a mile broad; and as this appeared the only point in the neighbourhood likely to offer any attraction to reindeer, it was on this side that I determined to land. My chief reason for having run into English Bay rather than Magdalena Bay was because we had been told at Hammerfest that it was the more likely place of the two for deer; and as we were sadly in want of fresh meat, this advantage quite decided us in our choice. As soon, therefore, as we had superintended the erection of

the tent, and set Wilson hard at work cleaning the glasses for the photographs, we slung our rifles on our backs and set off in search of deer. But in vain did I peer through my telescope across the dingy flat in front; not a vestige of a horn was to be seen, although in several places we came upon impressions of their track. At last our confidence in the reports of their great plenty became considerably diminished. Still the walk was very refreshing after our confinement on board; and although the thermometer was below freezing, the cold only made the exercise more pleasant.

A little to the northward I observed, lying on the sea-shore, innumerable logs of driftwood. This wood is floated all the way from America by the Gulf Stream, and as I walked from one huge bole to another, I could not help wondering in what primeval forest each had grown, what chance had originally cast them on the waters, and piloted them to this desert shore. Mingled with this fringe of unhewn timber that lined the beach lay waifs and strays of a more sinister kind; pieces of broken spars, an oar, a boat's flagstaff, and a few shattered fragments of some long-lost vessel's planking. Here and there, too, we would come upon skulls of walrus, ribs and shoulder-blades of bears, brought possibly by the ice in winter.

Turning again from the sea, we resumed our search for deer; but two or three hours more very stiff walking produced no better luck. Suddenly a cry from Fitz, who had wandered a little to the right, brought us helter-skelter to the spot where

he was standing. But it was not a stag he had called us to come and look upon. Half imbedded in the black moss at his feet there lay a grey deal coffin falling almost to pieces with age; the lid was gone, blown off probably by the wind—and within were stretched the bleaching bones of a human skeleton. A rude cross at the head of the grave still stood partially upright, and a Dutch inscription half worn away, preserved a record of the dead man's name and age.

. VANDER SCHELLING.
 COMMAN JACOB MOOR
 OB¹ 2 JUNE 1758 ÆT² 44.

It was evidently some poor whaler of the last century, to whom his companions had given the only burial possible in this frost-hardened earth, which even the summer sun has no force to penetrate beyond a couple of inches, and which will not afford to man the shallowest grave. A bleak resting-place for that hundred years' slumber, I thought, as I gazed on the dead mariner's remains!

As soon as Fitz had gathered a few of the little flowering mosses that grew inside the coffin we proceeded on our way, leaving poor Jacob Moor—like his great namesake³—alone in his glory.

Turning to the right, we scrambled up the spur of one of the mountains on the eastern side of the plain, and thence dived down among the valleys that run up between them. Although by this

¹ That is, *died*.

² That is, *aged*.

³ Sir John Moore.

means we opened up quite a new system of hills, and basins, and gullies, the general scenery did not change its characteristics. All vegetation—if the black moss deserves such a name—ceases when you ascend twenty feet above the level of the sea, and the sides of the mountains become nothing but steep slopes of rock, split and crumbled into an even surface by the frost. Every step we took unfolded a fresh succession of these jagged spikes.

Mountain climbing has never been a hobby of mine, so I was not tempted to play the part of Excelsior on any of these hill-sides, but for those who love such exercise a fairer or a more dangerous opportunity of distinguishing themselves could not be imagined. The owner of the very first Dutch ship that ever came to Spitzbergen broke his neck in attempting to climb a hill in Prince Charles's Foreland. Barentz very nearly lost several of his men under similar circumstances, and when Scoresby succeeded in making the ascent of another hill near Horn Sound, it was owing to his having taken the precaution of marking each upward step in chalk that he was ever able to get down again. The prospect from the summit, the approach to which was by a ridge so narrow that he sat astride upon its edge, seems amply to have repaid the exertion.

I do not think I can give you a better idea of the general effect of Spitzbergen scenery than by quoting his striking description of the panorama he beheld.

“The prospect was most extensive and grand. A fine sheltered bay was seen to the east of us, an arm of the same on the north-east, and the sea,

whose glassy surface was unruffled by a breeze, formed an immense expanse on the west; the icebergs rearing their proud crests almost to the tops of mountains between which they were lodged, and defying the power of the solar beams, were scattered in various directions about the sea-coast and in the adjoining bays. Beds of snow and ice filling extensive hollows, and giving an enamelled coat to adjoining valleys, one of which, commencing at the foot of the mountain where we stood, extended in a continued line towards the north, as far as the eye could reach; mountain rising above mountain, until by distance they dwindled into insignificance—the whole contrasted by a cloudless canopy of deepest azure, and enlightened by the rays of a blazing sun; and the effect aided by a feeling of danger, seated as we were on the pinnacle of a rock almost surrounded by tremendous precipices—all united to constitute a picture singularly sublime.

“ Our descent we found really a very hazardous, and in some instances a painful undertaking. Having by much care, and with some anxiety, made good our descent to the top of the secondary hills, we took our way down one of the steepest banks, and slid forward with great facility in a sitting posture. Towards the foot of the hill an expanse of snow stretched across the line of descent. This being loose and soft, we entered upon it without fear, but on reaching the middle of it we came to a surface of solid ice, perhaps a hundred yards across, over which we launched with astonishing velocity,

but happily escaped without injury. The men whom we left below viewed this latter movement with astonishment and fear."

So universally does this strange land bristle with peaks and needles of stone, that the views we ourselves obtained, though perhaps from a lower elevation, and certainly without the risk, scarcely yielded either in extent or picturesque grandeur to the scene described by Dr. Scoresby.

Having pretty well overrun the country to the northward, without coming on any more satisfactory signs of deer than their hoof-prints in the moss, we returned on board.

During the whole period of our stay in Spitzbergen, we had enjoyed unclouded sunshine. The nights were even brighter than the days, and afforded Fitz an opportunity of taking some photographic views by the light of a *midnight* sun. The cold was never very intense, though the thermometer remained below freezing; but about four o'clock every evening the salt-water bay in which the schooner lay was veneered over with a skin of ice one-eighth of an inch in thickness, and so elastic that even when the sea beneath was considerably agitated its surface remained unbroken, the smooth round waves taking the appearance of billows of oil. No description can give an adequate idea of the intense rigour of the six-months' winter in this part of the world. Stones crack with the noise of thunder; in a crowded hut the breath of its occupants will fall in flakes of snow; wine and spirits turn to ice; the snow burns like caustic; if

iron touches the flesh it brings the skin away with it; the soles of your stockings may be burnt off your feet before you feel the slightest warmth from the fire; linen taken out of boiling water instantly stiffens to the consistency of a wooden board; and heated stones will not prevent the sheets of the bed from freezing. If these are the effects of the climate within an air-tight, fire-warmed, crowded hut, what must they be among the dark, storm-lashed, mountain peaks outside!

It was now time to think of going south again; we had spent many more days on the voyage to Spitzbergen than I had expected, and I was continually haunted by the dread of your becoming anxious at not hearing from us. It was a great disappointment to be obliged to return without having got any deer; but your peace of mind was of more consequence to me than a ship-load of horns; and accordingly we decided on not remaining more than another day in our present berth; leaving it still an open question whether we should not run up to Magdalena Bay—if the weather proved very inviting—the last thing before quitting for ever the Spitzbergen shores.

We had killed nothing as yet, except a few eider ducks, and one or two ice-birds, the most graceful winged creatures I have ever seen, with immensely long pinions, and plumage of spotless white. Although enormous seals from time to time used to lift their wise grave faces above the water, with the dignity of sea-gods, none of us had any very great inclination to slay such rational human-

looking creatures, and with the exception of these and a white fish, a species of whale, no other living thing had been visible.

On the very morning, however, of the day settled for our departure, Fitz came down from a solitary expedition up a hill with the news of his having seen some ptarmigan. Having taken a rifle with him instead of a gun, he had not been able to shoot more than one, which he had brought back in triumph; but the hole made by the bullet was about the same size as the bird! Nevertheless, the slightest prospect of obtaining a supply of fresh meat was enough to reconcile us to any amount of exertion; therefore, on the strength of the pinch of feathers which Fitz kept gravely assuring us was the game he had bagged, we seized our guns—I took a rifle in case of a possible bear—and set our faces toward the hill.

After a good hour's pull we reached the shoulder which Fitz had indicated as the scene of his exploit, but a patch of snow was the only thing visible. Suddenly I saw Sigurdr, who was remarkably sharp sighted, run rapidly in the direction of the snow, and bringing his gun up to his shoulder, point it—as well as I could distinguish—at his own toes. When the smoke of the shot had cleared away, I fully expected to see the Iclander prostrate; guess then my relief when the body of a ptarmigan, driven by [so point-blank a discharge a couple of feet into the snow, was triumphantly dragged forth. At the same moment I perceived two or three dozen other

birds, brothers and sisters of the defunct, calmly strutting about under our very noses. By this time Sigurdr had reloaded, Fitz had also come up, and a regular massacre began. Retiring to a distance, the two sportsmen opened fire, and in a few seconds sixteen corpses strewed the ground.

Scarcely had they finished off the last survivor, when we were startled by the distant report of a volley of musketry, fired in the direction of the schooner. I could not conceive what had happened. Had a mutiny taken place? Again resounded the rattle of the firing. At all events there was no time to be lost in getting back; so, tying up the birds in three bundles, we flung ourselves down into the gulley by which we had ascended, and leaping on from stone to stone, to the infinite danger of our legs and necks, rolled rather than ran down the hill. On rounding the lower wall of the curve which hitherto had hid what was passing from our eyes, the first thing I observed was Wilson breasting up the hill, evidently in a state of the greatest agitation. As soon as he thought himself within earshot, he stopped dead short, and making a speaking-trumpet with his hands, shrieked, rather than shouted, "If you please, my Lord! If you please, my Lord, there's a b-e-a-a-a-r!" Concluding that the animal in question was at his heels—hidden from us probably by the inequality of the ground—I cocked my rifle, and prepared to roll him over the moment he should appear in sight. But what was my disappointment, when, on looking towards the

schooner, my eye caught sight of our three boats fastened in a row, and towing behind them a white floating object which my glass only too surely resolved the next minute into the dead bear !

On descending to the shore, I learned the whole story.

As Mr. Wyse was pacing the deck, his attention was suddenly attracted by a white speck in the water, swimming across from Prince Charles's Foreland, the long island which lies over against English Bay. When first observed, the creature, whatever it might be, was about a mile and a half off, the width of the channel between the island and the main being about five miles. Some said it was a bird, others a whale, and the cook suggested a mermaid. When the fact was ascertained that it was a real bear, a gun was fired as a signal for us to return; but it was evident that unless at once intercepted, Bruin would get ashore. Mr. Wyse, therefore, very properly determined to make sure of him. This was a matter of no difficulty: the poor beast showed very little fight. His first impulse was to swim away from the boat; and even after he had been wounded, he only turned round once or twice upon his pursuers.

Although I felt a little vexation that one of us should not have had the honour of slaying the bear in single combat—which would certainly have been for the benefit of his skin—the unexpected luck of having got one at all made us quite forget our personal disappointment. As for my people, they were beside themselves with delight. To have



HOISTING A POLAR BEAR ON BOARD

killed a polar bear was a great thing, but to eat him would be a greater. If artistically dealt with, his carcase would probably cut up into a supply of fresh meat for many days. One of the hands happened to be a butcher. In the course of a few hours, the late bear was converted into a row of the most tempting morsels of beef, hung about the rigging. Instead of in flags, the ship was dressed in joints.

In the meantime it so happened, that a fox, having stolen a piece of offal, was in a few minutes afterwards seized with convulsions. I had already given orders that the bear's liver should be thrown overboard, as being, if not poisonous, at all events very unwholesome. The seizure of the fox, coupled with this injunction, brought about a complete revolution in the men's minds with regard to the delicacies they had been so daintily preparing for themselves. Silently, one by one, the pieces were untied and thrown into the sea : I do not think a mouthful of bear was eaten on board the *Foam*. I observed, however, that for some days after the slaughter and dismemberment of the bear, my ship's company presented an unaccountably sleek appearance. As for the steward, his head and whiskers seemed carved out of black marble : a varnished boot would not have looked half so bright : I could have seen to shave myself in his back hair. I conclude, therefore, that the ingenious cook must, at all events, have succeeded in manufacturing a supply of genuine bear's-grease, of which they had largely availed themselves.

The bagging of the bear had so gloriously crowned our visit to Spitzbergen that our disappointment about the deer was no longer thought of; it was therefore with light hearts, and most complete satisfaction, that we prepared for departure.

Maid Marian had already carved on a flat stone an inscription, in Roman letters, recording the visit of the *Foam* to English Bay; and a cairn having been erected to receive it, the tablet was solemnly lifted to its resting-place. Underneath I placed a tin box, containing a memorandum similar to that left at Jan Mayen, as well as a printed dinner invitation from Lady —, which I happened to have on board. Having planted a boat's flag beside the rude monument, and brought on board with us a load of driftwood, to serve hereafter as Christmas yule-logs, we bade an eternal adieu to the silent hills around us; and weighing anchor stood out to sea. For some hours a lack of wind still left us hanging about the shore, in the midst of a grave society of seals; but soon after a gentle breeze sprang up in the South, and about three o'clock on Friday, the 11th of August, we again found ourselves spanking along before a six-knot breeze over the pale green sea.

Up to the evening of the day on which we quitted English Bay the weather had been most beautiful; calm, sunshiny, dry, and pleasant. Within a few hours of our getting under weigh a great change had taken place, and by midnight it had become as foggy and disagreeable as ever. The sea was pretty clear. During the course of the night we

came upon one or two wandering patches of drift ice, but so loosely packed that we had no difficulty in pushing through them. About four o'clock in the morning, a long line of close ice was reported right ahead, stretching south—as far as the eye could reach. We had come about eighty miles since leaving Spitzbergen. The usual boundary of the Greenland ice in summer runs—according to Scoresby—along the second parallel of west longitude. This we had already crossed; so that it was to be presumed the barricade we saw before us was a frontier of the fixed ice. In accordance, therefore, with my plan, we now began working to the southward.

The sea became comparatively clear, as far as could be seen from the deck of the vessel; although small vagrant patches of ice that we came up with occasionally continued to indicate the proximity of larger bodies on either side of us.

Ice had become a part of our daily existence. It was the first thing we thought of in the morning, the last thing we spoke of at night. It glittered and grinned maliciously at us in the sunshine; it winked mysteriously through the stifling fog; it stretched itself like a prostrate giant, with huge, portentous shoulders, and shadowy limbs, right across our course; or danced gleefully in broken groups in the little schooner's wake. There was no getting rid of it, or forgetting it; and if, at night, we sometimes returned in dreams to the green summer world—to the fervent harvest fields of England, and heard "the murmurs of innumerable

bees," or the song of larks on thymy uplands—thump! bump! splash! gra-a-ate! came the sudden reminder of our friend on the starboard bow; and then sometimes a scurry on deck, and a general "scrimmage" of the whole society, in endeavours to prevent more serious collisions. Moreover, I could not say, with your old French friend, that "Familiar'ty breeds despise." The more we saw of it the less we liked it; its cold presence sent a chilly sense of discouragement to the heart, and I had daily to struggle with an ardent desire to throw a boot at Wilson's head every time his sepulchral voice announced the "*Ice all round!*"

It was not until the 14th of August, five days after quitting Spitzbergen, that we lost sight of it altogether. From that moment, the temperature of the sea steadily rose, and we felt that we were sailing back again into the pleasant summer.

The weather soon changed. First the wind dropped altogether; but though the calm lasted several hours, the sea strangely enough appeared to become all the rougher, tossing and tumbling restlessly *up and down* (not over and over as in a gale) like a sick man on a fever bed; the impulse to the waves seeming to proceed from all four quarters of the world at once. Then—like jurymen with a verdict of death upon their lips—the heavy, ominous clouds slowly passed into the North-West.

A dead stillness followed—a breathless pause—until, at some mysterious signal, the solemn voice of the storm hurtled over the deep. Luckily we

were quite ready for it; the gale came from the right quarter, and the fiercer it blew the better. For the next three days and three nights it was a scurry over the sea such as I never had before; nine or ten knots an hour was the very least we ever went, and 240 miles was the average distance we made every four-and-twenty hours.

Anything grander and more exciting than the sight of the sea under these circumstances you cannot imagine. The vessel herself remains very steady; when you are below you scarcely know you are not in port. But on raising your head above the companion, the first thing which meets your eye is an upright wall of black water, towering—you hardly know how many feet—into the air over the stern. Like a lion walking on its hind legs it comes straight at you, roaring and shaking its white mane with fury; it overtakes the vessel, the upright shiny face curves inwards, the white mane seems to hang above your very head; but ere it topples over, the nimble little ship has already slipped from underneath. You hear the disappointed jaws of the sea-monster snap angrily together, the schooner disdainfully kicks up her heel, and raging and bubbling up on either side the quarter the unpausing wave sweeps on, and you see its round back far ahead, gradually swelling upwards, as it gathers strength and volume for a new effort.

We had now got considerably to the southward of North Cape. We had already seen several ships, and you would hardly imagine with what childish

delight my people hailed these symptoms of having again reached more "Christian latitudes," as they called them.

I had always intended, ever since my conversation with Mr. T. about the Mälstrom, to have called in at Loffoden Islands on our way south, and ascertain for myself the real truth about this famous vortex. To have blotted such a bugbear out of the map of Europe, if its existence really was a myth, would at all events have rendered our cruise not altogether fruitless. But since leaving Spitzbergen we had never once seen the sun, and to attempt to make so dangerous a coast in a gale of wind and a thick mist, with no more certain knowledge of the ship's position than our dead reckoning afforded, was out of the question; so about one o'clock in the morning, the weather giving no signs of improvement, the course I had shaped in the direction of the island was altered, and we stood away again to the southward.

This manoeuvre was not unobserved by Wilson, but he mistook its meaning. Having, I suppose, overheard us talking at dinner about the Mälstrom, he now concluded the supreme hour had arrived. He did not exactly comprehend the terms we used, but had gathered that the spot was one fraught with danger. Concluding from the change made in the vessel's course that we were proceeding towards the dreadful locality, he gave himself up to despair, and lay tossing in his hammock in sleepless anxiety. At last the load of his forebodings was greater than he could bear; he gets up, steals into the Doctor's

cabin, wakes him up, and standing over him, whispers, "*Sir!*" "What is it?" says Fitz, thinking perhaps some one was ill. "Do you know where we are going?" "Why, to Trondhjem," answered Fitz. "We *were* going to Trondhjem," rejoins Wilson, "but we ain't now, the vessel's course was altered two hours ago. Oh, Sir! we are going to Whirlpool—to *Whirl-rl-l-pooo-l!* Sir!" in a quaver of consternation, and so glides back to bed like a phantom, leaving the Doctor utterly unable to divine the occasion of his visit.

The whole of the next day the gale continued. We had now sailed back into night; it became therefore a question how far it would be advisable to carry on during the ensuing hours of darkness, considering how uncertain we were as to our real position. The west coast of Norway is very dangerous; a continuous sheet of sunken rocks lies out along its entire edge for eight or ten miles to sea. There are no lighthouses to warn the mariner off; and if we were wrong in our reckoning, as we might very well be, it was possible we might stumble on the land sooner than we expected. I knew the proper course would be to lie quietly until we could take an observation; but time was so valuable, and I was so fearful you would be getting anxious! So I determined to carry on during the night.

Nevertheless, I confess I was very uneasy. Though I went to bed and fell asleep—for at sea nothing prevents that process—my slumbers were constantly agitated by the most vivid dreams that

I ever remember to have had. Dreams of an arrival in England, and your coming down to meet us, and all the pleasure I had in recounting our adventures to you; then suddenly your face seemed to fade away beneath a veil of angry grey surge that broke over low sharp-pointed rocks; and the next moment there resounded over the ship that cry which has been the preface to so many a disaster, the ring of which none who have ever heard it are likely to forget, "Breakers ahead!"

In a moment I was on deck, dressed, for it is always best to dress, and there sure enough, right ahead, about a mile-and-a-half off, through the mist, which had come on very thick, I could distinguish the upward shooting fluff of seas shattering against rocks. No land was to be seen, but the line of breakers every instant became more evident; at the pace we were going in seven or eight minutes we should be upon them. Now, thought I to myself, we shall see whether a stout heart beats beneath the silk tartan! The result covered that brilliant garment with glory and salt water. To tack was impossible, we could only wear, and to wear in such a sea was no very pleasant operation. But the little ship seemed to know what she was about, as well as any of us: up went the helm, round came the schooner into the trough of the sea, high over her quarter toppled an enormous sea, built up of I know not how many tons of water, and hung over the deck; by some unaccountable wriggle, an instant ere it thundered down she had twisted her stern on one side, and the wave passed

underneath. In another minute her head was to the sea, the mainsail was eased over, and all danger was past.

What was to now be done? That the land we had seen was the coast of Norway I could not believe. Wrong as our dead reckoning evidently was, it could not be so wrong as that. Yet only one other supposition was possible, viz., that we had not come so far south as we imagined, and that we had stumbled upon Roost, a little rocky island that lies about twenty miles to the southward of the Loffoden Islands.

We soon found that the island upon which we had so nearly run *was* Roost. We were still nearly 200 miles from our port. "Turn the hands up! Make sail!" and away we went again on the same course as before, at the rate of ten knots an hour.

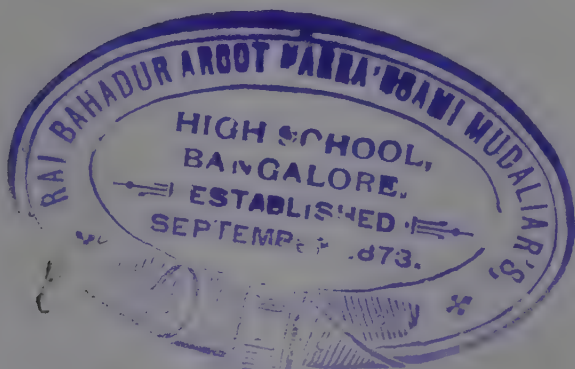
By three o'clock next day we were up with Vigten; and now a very nasty piece of navigation began. In order to make the northern entrance of the Trondhjems Fiord, you have first to find your way into a kind of oblong basin about sixteen miles long, formed by a ledge of low rocks running parallel with the mainland, at a distance of ten miles to seaward. Though the space between this outer boundary and the coast is so wide, in consequence of the network of sunken rocks which stuffs it up, the passage by which a vessel can enter is very narrow, and the only landmark to enable you to find the channel is the head one of the string of outer islets. As this rock is about the size of a dining-table, perfectly flat, and rising only a few



TRONDHJEM

feet above the level of the sea, to attempt to make it is like looking for a needle in a bottle of hay. It was already beginning to grow very late and dark by the time we had come up with the spot where it ought to have been, but not a vestige of such a thing had turned up. Should we not sight it in a quarter of an hour, we must go to sea again, and lie to for the night, a very unpleasant alternative for any one so impatient as I was to reach a port. Just as I was going to give the order, Fitz espied its black back just peeping up above the tumbling water on our starboard bow. We had hit it off to a yard!

In another half-hour we were stealing down in quiet water towards the entrance of the fiord. All this time not a rag of a pilot had appeared; and it was without any such functionary that the schooner swept up next morning between the wooded, grain-laden slopes of the beautiful loch to Trondhjem, the capital of the ancient sea-kings of Norway.



B.B.A.N.M'S H.S (M) LIBRARY

B'lore-42

Accession No ; ...1813...

U.D.C. No : 8-3(DUF)N

Date; 11-8-81

7-12-83.



